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# Harmony and Dissonance: Mennonite Visions of Community and Identity

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# HARMONY AND DISSONANCE:

# MENNONITE VISIONS OF COMMUNITY AND IDENTITY

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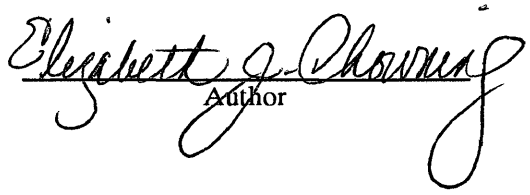

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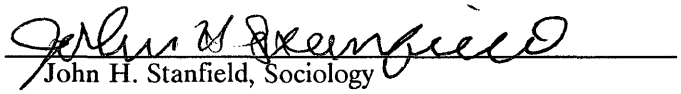
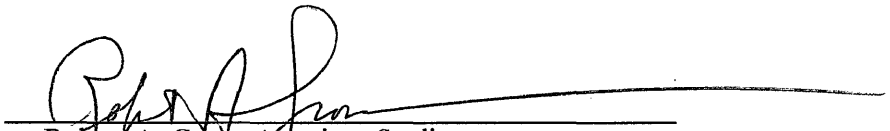


John H. Stanfield, Sociology



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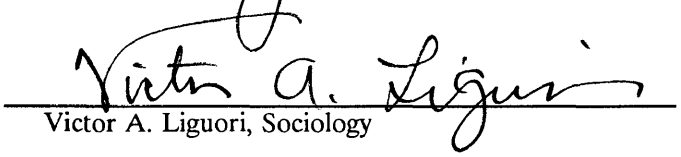

Victor A. Liguori, Sociology

TABLE OF CONTENTS

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank my advisor, Professor John H. Stanfield, for his guidance and support. In suggesting the Newport News Mennonite community as a possible topic for an oral history, he helped introduce me to exciting themes and methods in social science as well as a wonderful group of people. His enthusiasm for the project was inspiring and the freedom he gave me to explore it was invaluable.

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Finally, I give my heartfelt thanks to all the members of the Newport News Mennonite community. Everybody I spoke to was friendly and forthcoming. This includes many people whom I met briefly at church functions; they barely knew who I was but they took the time and trouble to answer my questions and offer their assistance. My six informants are very special people. They graciously welcomed me into their homes and responded enthusiastically to my questions. As a novice oral historian, I had many misgivings about asking potentially embarrassing questions. They eased my fears and offered their opinions freely. In fact, I was given so much information, I could include only a small portion of it in the thesis. What follows owes much to their generosity; its shortcomings, however, are my responsibility.

# LIST OF FIGURES

# ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore an urban Mennonite community as it is experienced by its members. Using a combination of unstructured interviewing and participant observation methods, I have concentrated on the shared meanings that can be discovered in the conversational speech of group members. Employing transcribed interviews as a "cultural text," I look for evidence of how Newport News, Virginia Mennonites sustain community under modern urban conditions that discourage the modest living and daily, intragroup relations Mennonites have traditionally sought.

My analysis focuses on micro- and macro-subjective phenomena, that is, subjective meanings made by social actors on individual, group and cultural levels. I therefore discuss the contributions of phenomenology and symbolic interactionism to the theoretical foundations of my approach, particularly the debt my analysis owes to Berger and Luckman's (1966) The Social Construction of Reality, Berger's (1967) The Sacred Canopy, and Cohen's (1985) The Symbolic Construction of Community.

Both as an introduction to my study of the local community and as a means of exploring the larger Mennonite culture, I discuss the group's changing understanding of its history. Placed in the context of twentieth-century social pressures, Mennonite historiography can be seen as a vital part of an educated elite's effort to define the group's identity. Old symbols associated with the Mennonites' sixteenth-century Anabaptist heritage are reappropriated for the reconstruction of the group's mission.

The history of the Newport News Mennonite colony offers many insights into the processes by which subjective meanings and objective (observable) structures are used to construct community. The stories of two women who grew up in the colony between the 1930s and 1960s contain countless examples demonstrating the subtle ways members were knit together in the effort to maintain protective boundaries around the group. Even though symbols (particularly those associated with community and identity) might have different meanings for individual members, their common *use* has served to link local Mennonites to their group.

Now that the geographically-defined, homogenous Mennonite colony no longer exists, group members search for other means of preserving community. Their efforts have attracted many newcomers who were socialized into different cultural and religious traditions. Among these newcomers are individuals who work directly or indirectly for the military. In one sense, this situation is cause for celebration, for it provides members with opportunities to "have fellowship" with Christians who might not otherwise be exposed to the Mennonite belief in pacifism. However, growing ties with the defense community are seen by some as a threat to the continued vitality of the "Peace Witness" so central to the Mennonite faith.

I discuss some indications that participants who come to local Mennonite congregations from other faith traditions may indeed bring with them attitudes about church-going that are incompatible with the "Anabaptist Vision," the radical "witness" with which the educated Mennonite elite identifies. I conclude that the local community and the Mennonite World to which it belongs are microcosms of human society; they offer opportunities to study questions about culture on a small scale.

# HARMONY AND DISSONANCE:

# MENNONITE VISIONS OF COMMUNITY AND IDENTITY

# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

Because their traditional, rural lifestyle has been increasingly threatened by the encroachment of cities and suburbs in recent years, Mennonites have been valuable subjects for social scientific study. The average (at least, stereotypical) Mennonite community offers the opportunity to study on a small scale some of sociology's classic problems or themes: industrialization, urbanization, and the transition from traditional community life (Gemeinschaft) to modern, impersonal associations (Gesselschaft). The community I have studied is not, however, the stereotypical Mennonite village sentimentalized by media images of plainly dressed, quaintly traditional people trotting away into Pennsylvania sunsets. That stereotype does have a basis in reality; communities resembling that ideal still exist. I find them interesting not simply because they are anachronistic, but primarily because of their symbolic value for group members and outsiders alike. Rather than seeking out a traditional or "Old Order" Mennonite community as a laboratory for the study of endangered or disappearing folkways, I wondered about the "modern" Mennonites who no longer live in remote villages and have already undergone the socio-economic transformations associated with the modern industrial world.

I set out to conduct an oral history of urban Mennonites by studying community as it is experienced by its members. Gaining access to insider perspectives while trying to control my own biases as an outsider requires taking

some liberties with standard interviewing methods. Rather than preparing questions and guiding my informants' responses (that is, "conducting" interviews), I attempted to have less-structured conversations. I began with the assumption that my informants' stories would be more useful to me as statements of present-day attitudes than as strictly historical accounts. Being more interested in the implications of the past for the present than in trying to establish what "really" happened in one Mennonite community during the early and middle decades of the 20th century, I probed sparingly and listened carefully for the issues that seemed most important to my informants (see Appendix A for more information on this methodology).

My emphasis on people's experience of community led me to consider social meanings, that is, symbols and definitions negotiated by the group and used by individual members. My study of these social meanings is advanced by an examination of the *concept* of community itself in addition to issues such as religion and ethnicity that help shape this *particular* community. Mennonites have a distinctive religious and ethnic heritage embracing--among other qualities--humility, pacifism, and separation from the rest of society. Historically, the concept and reality of community have been integral to the Mennonite "witness to the world."

I have studied the Mennonite community in Newport News, Virginia. This community consists of four congregations on the peninsula between the James and York Rivers.[1] These congregations are the legacy of a small Mennonite agricultural colony established in 1897 by a handful of bargain-hunting families who found in Southeastern Virginia a temperate climate, inexpensive land, and the right

combination of rural isolation and urban proximity to help ensure a healthy return on their investment and hard work.[2] Today, there is little farmland left on the lower Peninsula. The Denbigh neighborhood, where Mennonites were the majority fifty years ago, is now a crowded subdivision bordered by strip malls and fast food restaurants. In view of the altered landscape, with all its implications for a tradition-bound group, one may well wonder whether the colony has indeed survived. There have been so many profound changes in lifestyle over a short period. First, as a result of coming into greater contact with outsiders during the 1940s and '50s, local Mennonites had to adjust to contemporary American culture in just one generation.[3] Then, without many of their customary geographical and cultural buffers, they weathered the same storms that rocked the rest of society in the 1960s, '70s and '80s. How has the group adjusted to these changes and maintained its identity? How is that identity affected by the fact that this once highly visible community is now all but invisible to most who do not have direct contact with its members? I set out to learn some of the answers to these and other questions by interviewing at length a few Newport News Mennonites, studying the transcribed conversations for clues to their understandings of community, and then comparing these findings to those of the scholarly literature as well as my own participant-observations of church services and other congregational events.

My primary sources are the transcribed interviews of six community members. The first and most extensive interviews were with two women: Martha, who grew up in the colony during the 1930s and '40s, and Kate, who grew up there during the

1950s and '60s.[4] Next, I spoke to Jackie who joined the original Warwick River congregation in the 1980s when her youngest child was attending the church-run school. The experiences of this "non-ethnic" Mennonite got me interested in learning more about the efforts of the Mennonite Church to expand and to welcome newcomers. In Newport News, such efforts are bound to result in some conflict between Mennonites' traditional pacifism and the overwhelming military presence in this part of Virginia. I decided to attend Sunday services at the newer congregation, Huntington, which includes as many new members as "ethnic" members whose families have been Mennonite for generations.[5] First I met with the pastor of this congregation. Although not a native of the Newport News community, he had a Mennonite upbringing similar to that described by Martha and Kate; his perspective is therefore one of an outsider in the geographical sense but, as a life-long Mennonite, he shares the background and assumptions of the older community members more than those of the new church members who grew up in different faiths and cultures. I had heard from my first informants that some members of the military attend the local congregations and that there had been a great deal of discussion about whether active military personnel could be admitted into membership. I discussed the issue with the pastor and expressed an interest in talking to members of the military who are involved with the church. He contacted on my behalf the two applicable couples in that congregation. As a result, I had two conversations with Jim and Dawn, a couple their 30s; both serve in the armed forces and both have been active in the church although they are not baptized members.

My attendance at church services and some other special gatherings provided invaluable opportunities for participant observation, supplementing and clarifying the interview texts. Secondary sources include the local Mennonite community newspaper, a local member's autobiography, the colony's fifty-year anniversary history book, the national Mennonite Church's publication The Gospel Herald, and scholarly literature on the theology and social organization of Anabaptist sects. All these sources have elaborated the picture of the small community I have chosen to study, placing it in its historical and cultural contexts.

Just as the community I have studied is given meaning by many past and present contexts, this research project itself is shaped by traditions and trends. All research constitutes an effort to enter into an ongoing discussion. My comments fit into discussions about a range of topics, which, in turn, fuel a fundamental debate in the social sciences and the humanities. Accordingly, Chapter Two will consider briefly the debate that pits individual consciousness against social structure in an effort to explain social dynamics. I then outline the concepts from social theory and research that have helped shape my project and my interpretations. Method is another important context, as the researcher's conduct of her investigation also has a direct and profound effect on her interpretations of the informants' experiences. Therefore, in Appendix A, I sketch the project's evolution and the methodological lessons I learned. Chapter Three reviews the historical and cultural contexts of Mennonites in general and the Newport News colony in particular. Here I consider the growing interest in the issue of "Mennonite Identity" within the North American

churches. Rather than approaching the question "Who are the Mennonites?" by treating their history as a simple cultural genealogy (situation "x" gave birth to viewpoint "y"), I examine Mennonites' changing understanding of their history--their search for a "usable past"--as a reflection of current debates about what it means to be Mennonite.

Chapter Four begins the discussion of my own research findings. Using the interview transcriptions as a cultural text, I turn to the local experience of identity and community. In an effort to understand what these words mean to my informants, I consider the experiences and attitudes that helped initiate them into the Mennonite world view. In Chapter Five, I consider what newcomers may hope to find in the Mennonite church and the implications of these expectations for the future of the group. Can traditional visions serve a dynamic new reality? As I consider Mennonites' struggle over the demarcation of their group's boundaries--that is, the reconstruction of the Mennonite identity--I look to the experiences of the Newport News colony for possible answers to this question.

# CHAPTER II

# THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

In seeking to understand social phenomena, theorists have grappled with many variations on the theme of "agency" versus "structure." The central question of the debate might be expressed as follows: can social life be reduced to the decisions and behavior of largely independent actors or is behavior ultimately determined by objective social structures (formed, for example, by institutions and power relationships) over which individuals exercise little if any control? This question is fundamental to the point of being taken for granted in much of social inquiry. Whether a researcher sets out to study a married couple or a multinational corporation, it is difficult to discuss social phenomena without responding at least implicitly to the agency/structure dichotomy. The theoretical orientation that drives a researcher and his or her project is based in part on a set of hypotheses about human nature and the properties of social structure. As with any other bias, it is necessary to examine a researcher's assumptions about agency and structure and to consider their implications for her questions, methods and conclusions.

## Representing Agency and Structure

I bring to this project the assumption that human agency and social structure are interdependent and that any comprehensive study of the social world must consider this relationship. In order to respond to the debate which tends to view these qualities as opposing forces, it might be helpful to picture the concepts of

human agency and social structure at opposite ends of a continuum. The extremes lead ultimately to untenable arguments (either that society's rules and institutions are nothing but illusions or that human beings are nothing but the powerless creations of society). We might therefore ask where a researcher's theoretical orientation falls on the continuum stretching between these extremes. An even better question might be, how shall we use the continuum in order to describe social existence in terms of *processes* instead of static properties? In an effort to ground my discussion in an integrated view of agency and structure, I have used George Ritzer's (1980, 1991) "levels of social reality" model. Although developed as a way of organizing his study of social theory (metatheory), Ritzer's schema could be also be helpful in the systematic examination of social processes.[6]

Ritzer approaches the problem of agency and structure by representing social processes as two intersecting continua (see Figure 1). The microscopic/macroscopic dimension deals with the *scale* of social phenomena, from individuals and face-to-face relations at the micro end to whole nations or society in the abstract at the macro end. The objective/subjective continuum represents an important *qualitative*

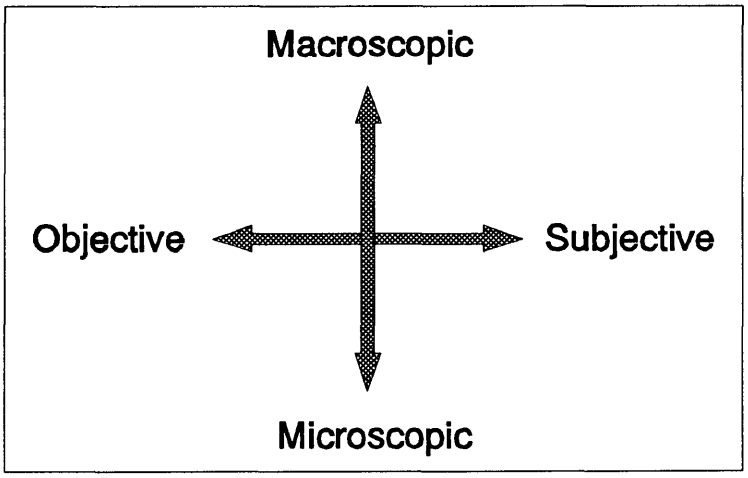


**Figure 1: Ritzer's Continua**

dimension of social reality: observable factors versus those that exist "solely in the realm of ideas" (Ritzer, 1988, p. 398).[7]

The intersecting continua of Figure 1 represent an effort to combat the distortion of simple dichotomies taken out of context. Having pointed out the problems inherent in rigid categories formed by polar opposites, however, Ritzer does develop some groupings of his own, for heuristic purposes. The four quadrants formed by the intersection of his quantitative and qualitative dimensions are Ritzer's categories: (1) Macro-objective, (2) Macro-subjective, (3) Micro-objective, and (4) Micro-subjective (see Figure 2). These categories represent a pragmatic compromise that can be continually renegotiated: they provide the boundaries necessary to make comprehensible explanations while retaining the continua, symbols of social interaction's complexity.

| | |
|---|---|
| Macro-Objective<br><br>Examples:<br>society, law, bureaucracy, architecture, technology, and language | Macro-Subjective<br><br>Examples:<br>culture, norms, and values |
| Micro-Objective<br><br>Examples:<br>patterns of behavior, action and interaction | Micro-Subjective<br><br>Examples:<br>the various facets of the social constuction of reality |

Figure 2: Ritzer's Four Levels of Social Reality and Examples

My methods and questions have served to focus my research primarily on micro-subjective phenomena and theory. However, I have attempted to understand this level better by relating it to the other levels of social reality suggested by Ritzer. His schema is itself the product of a long tradition of social theory that I cannot adequately review here. There are several contemporary authors who have contributed to the integration within social theory of the levels described by Ritzer. They include sociologists, social anthropologists, philosophers and linguists. Within sociology, attempts to relate micro-subjective phenomena to macro-subjective and objective ones have been made in subdisciplines such as social psychology, the sociology of knowledge, and the sociology of religion. My work is indebted, as is much of current social research, to one source that draws on all of these contributions for its development of an integrated interpretive scheme.

**Key Concepts**

In The Social Construction of Reality (1966), sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman seek to apply "systematic theoretical reasoning" to the study of "commonsense knowledge."[8] Unlike other, more micro-oriented approaches to everyday life, theirs is a comprehensive phenomenological treatment of the social world which places human interaction in its many contexts.[9] They begin with a microscopic focus on individuals' exchange of subjective meanings but go on to assert that society does indeed have an objective existence (it possesses "objective facticity").[10] Therefore, their title may be seen as a dual reference: social construction is both a *process* (the making of meaning in interaction with other social

actors) and the *product* of that process (an "edifice" of socially-produced ideas and institutions which "presents itself" to individuals as an objective, coercive fact of life with an existence of its own).

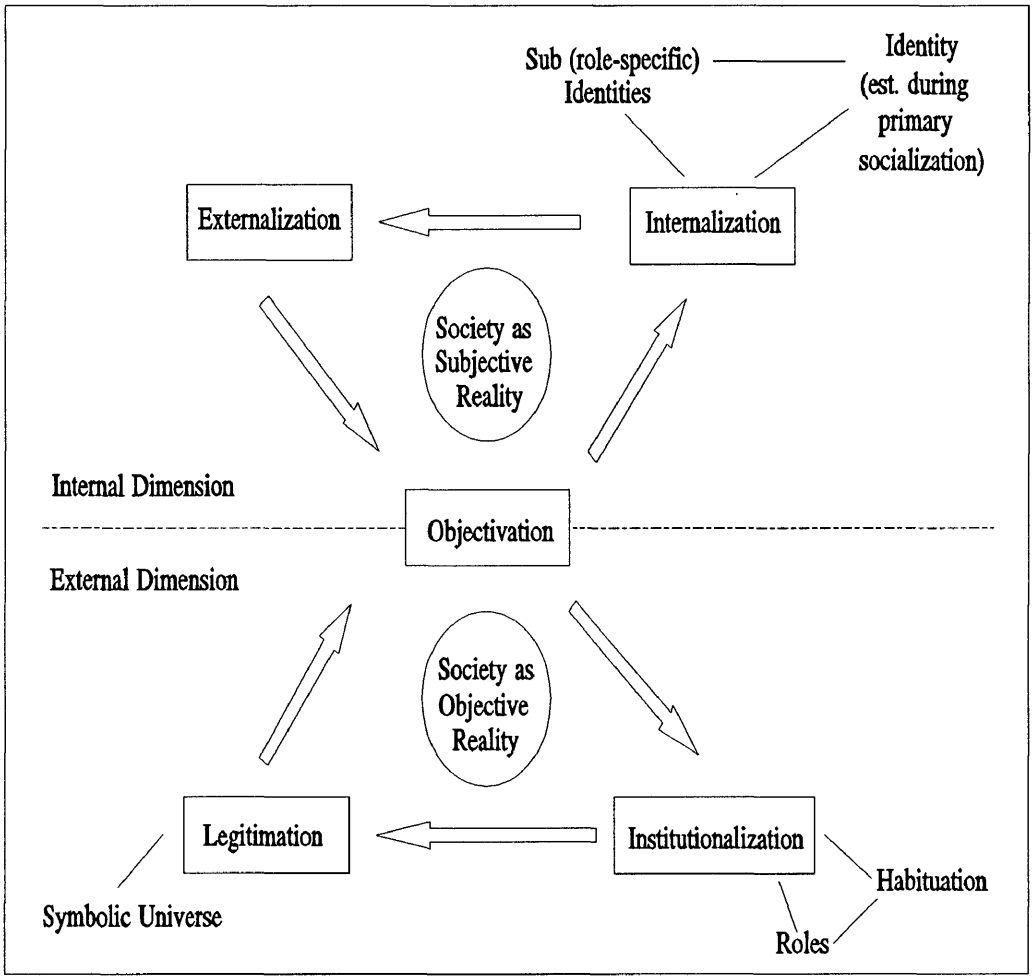


Figure 3: The Social Construction of Reality
adapted from Berger and Luckman (1966)

Berger and Luckman describe social reality as an interaction of the micro/macro and objective/subjective dimensions. Because they use the term

"objective" in a different sense than that embodied in Ritzer's model, it may be more helpful to picture their argument as presented in Figure 3.[11] They conceive of the relationship between self and society as a "dialectic" consisting of "three moments, or steps." The moments form a cycle without any real beginning or end; however, it is appropriate to start where each individual starts as a new arrival in society: the natural process of externalization, or "the ongoing outpouring of human being into the world" in both physical and mental activity. (Berger, 1967, p. 4) Human beings enter the world "unfinished," without the elaborate set of instincts that "program" in detail the lives of other species. Because "Man does not have a given relationship" to the world or his own body, "He cannot rest within himself, but must continuously come to terms with himself by expressing himself in activity. Human existence is an ongoing 'balancing act' between man and his body, man and his world." (pp. 5-6) In the process of externalization, human beings build a "world" for themselves, a culture. Its purpose is to provide the structure and stability lacking in the human organism.

Through the process of objectivation, the products of human activity (both physical and mental) acquire "a reality that confronts its original producers as a facticity external to and other than themselves." External entities such as norms, institutions, and language as well as internal ones (identity, for example) become "objectivated" through social interaction. The third moment in this process is internalization, the reappropriation by individuals of the socially-constructed reality, the incorporation of objective reality into subjective consciousness. Berger offers the

best summary of the social cycle: "It is through externalization that society is a human product. It is through objectivation that society becomes a reality *sui generis* [in itself]. It is through internalization that man is a product of society." (p. 4)

While all three moments in the cycle are necessary to social life, objectivation is understandably the subject of most sociological study because it is the most obviously social moment. Once everyday reality is perceived as real, the process of internalization has begun. Nothing can be perceived as real until it is a shared reality. Even once it is internalized as reality, that reality must be maintained through social interaction: "The individual appropriates the world in conversation with others . . . both identity and world remain real to himself only as long as he can continue the conversation." (1967, p. 16) "Conversation" in this sense need not consist of language, although language (or, more generally, the production of signs) makes possible much of social interaction and is a powerful agent of objectivation.

As shown in this figure, I picture Berger and Luckman's argument as describing first the external then the internal dimensions of the objectivation process. The external dimension of reality construction originates in small scale interaction (primary socialization of children) and is maintained predominantly by daily one-on-one and small group interaction. The everyday knowledge shared by people in this vital face-to-face exchange is itself the product of human interaction. But even in face-to-face situations, when individuals have the greatest power to construct reality, the flow of events is ordered and made meaningful in part by actors' use of types. Berger and Luckman explain this process in the following way: "My encounters with

others in everyday life are typical in a double sense--I apprehend the other *as* a type and I interact with him in a situation that itself is typical." (pp. 30-31) Such "typification," or classification, is vital to the establishment of order, perhaps humanity's greatest psychological imperative.[12] Paradoxically, a degree of control is sacrificed with each effort to gain order; with each typification of other people, events and ideas, immediacy is lost and the ability to direct the flow of events, to speak one's own mind in the social conversation, is diminished. The reality of everyday life therefore becomes:

> a continuum of typifications, which are progressively anonymous as they are removed from the 'here and now' of the face-to-face situation . . . social structure is the sum total of these typifications and of the recurrent patterns of interaction established by means of them. (1966, p. 33)

The process of objectivation is amplified as people seek to establish order through the efficiency and predictability of institutions. Humans have a natural tendency to "habitualize," to develop routines in order to simplify thought and action. Institutions (from groups as small as nuclear families to organizations as large as multinational corporations) aid in this process by setting up roles that organize relationships through typification. Of course, with the increase in size of the organization, there is a corresponding increase in the power of roles and routines (bureaucracy) and a corresponding decrease in the power of individuals to change their reality at will.

Institutions and the objectivations they promote are in turn supported by legitimation. This process need not be overt; in fact, institutional legitimations are

probably most powerful when they become part of taken-for-granted reality for, "Legitimation not only tells the individual why he *should* perform one action and not another; it also tells him why things *are* what they are." (p. 93-94) However, intentional legitimations can also become part of taken-for-granted reality by people who live within the institutional order explained and justified by them. Berger and Luckman use the term "symbolic universe" for this special type of legitimation; they define symbolic universes as "bodies of theoretical tradition that integrate different provinces of meaning and encompass the institutional order in a symbolic totality." (p. 95)[13]

The symbolic universe legitimates both "individual biography" and the institutional order; it makes subjectively meaningful the individual's passage through "institutionally predefined phases." (p. 93) In linking identity to the symbolic universe, Berger and Luckman reveal the degree to which they believe one's sense of self is dependent upon participation in the social world:

> Identity is ultimately legitimated by placing it within the context of a symbolic universe. Mythologically speaking, the individual's 'real' name is the one given to him by his god. The individual may thus 'know who he is' by anchoring his identity in a cosmic reality protected from both the contingencies of socialization and the malevolent self-transformations of marginal experience. (1966, p. 100)

As suggested by the above quotations, the notion of a symbolic universe has special relevance to the study of religion. Berger's followup to his collaboration with Luckman, The Sacred Canopy (1967), was an effort to develop the notion of religion as a "nomos" or meaningful order. (p. 19) Religion is a sacred canopy inasmuch as

it is a shield against chaos, protection from the terror of anomie (normlessness). It has historically occupied a place of paramount importance in humanity's constructed reality for it is the ultimate exercise of self-externalization: "Religion is the audacious attempt to conceive of the entire universe as being humanly significant." (p. 28)

Religion can act to legitimate the institutional order, and it also incorporates legitimations of its own. For example, many societies institutionalize a religious understanding of the visible world as a microcosm of the cosmic order. In such societies, religion can serve to legitimate roles such as fatherhood and kingship by explaining them as the counterparts of godhood within the family and the state. Religion may not only reinforce society's other legitimations, it may also take over some areas of reality that no other sources of legitimation can adequately address. For example, religious legitimations have most successfully dealt with the "marginal situations" in life that are most difficult for humans to explain: dreams and death. (p. 44) Finally, religion itself is legitimated when, through religious activity (ritual, for example), it is "crystallized into complexes of meaning that become part of a religious tradition." These complexes of meaning may then "attain a measure of autonomy as against this activity." (p. 41) Complexes of meaning may include doctrine or, in a more intricately developed form, theology. Regardless of the skill with which they are articulated in these complexes of meaning, "All religious traditions . . . require specific communities for their continuing plausibility." (p. 46) The religious community is the "social base" or "plausibility structure" for its

particular religious tradition. (p. 45) As long as the religious adherent remains in "conversation" with others in the community, his or her religious identity and world-view will remain real. In societies where there is not religious "monopoly," where many plausibility structures and their legitimations exist in "pluralistic competition," religious communities can take on a "sectarian" character, a self-definition based primarily on opposition to non-believers. (pp. 48-49; 164)

**Applications**

Even before I became familiar with the agency/structure and micro/macro debates, the research methods I chose helped determine the view of human nature that would shape my questions and interpretations. Interviews and observations led me to focus my attention on the active efforts of individuals, alone and in interaction with others, to "make sense" of their experience. At the same time, my object was to determine how individual experiences fit into the larger "Mennonite Experience" and, specifically, that of the local community. Because the interviewing process and its transcript products provided me with a new perspective on what otherwise might be dismissed as obvious, I focused on a factor I normally take for granted: individual differences. First I noticed that, although the informants share many basic concepts, attitudes, and beliefs, they often emphasize different aspects of their shared experience. Normally, one might define these emphases as subtle variations on the general themes expressed by all. On closer inspection, however, these discrepancies have potential for being more substantial. Rather than simply dismissing them as unremarkable idiosyncracies, I asked myself why individuals or a whole group might be disposed to accept inconsistency rather than try to eliminate it. I wondered how the Mennonites could tolerate sometimes profound differences in belief and practice. It seemed that group solidarity must depend on *some* unity of thought and behavior among its members.

Social Anthropologist Anthony Cohen (1985) offers an alternative explanation of community solidarity. By treating community as a symbol rather than a quality of

association (the sense in which Gemeinschaft is usually understood), Cohen suggests that social ties are more dependent upon a shared language (spoken or otherwise) than actual consensus or homogeneity. Taking the lead of Fredrick Barth, he focuses on group boundaries as symbolic constructions that help shape members' interpretations. In his study of ethnic communities, Barth suggested that it is the "*boundary* that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses." A group's boundaries "canalize social life," often by defining a group in terms of what it is *not*, rather than what it is. (1969, p. 15) In so doing, suggests Cohen, ". . . the boundary encapsulates the identity of the community and, like the identity of an individual, is called into being by the exigencies of social interaction." (1985, p. 12)

Cohen's study of community concentrated on the symbols that act as a group's boundaries. His conclusions add another dimension to Berger and Luckman's concept of the symbolic universe. True to the symbolic interactionist tradition from which Berger and Luckman's work also flows, Cohen asserts that "Symbols do not so much express meaning as give us the capacity to make meaning." There are categories of meaning that are

> . . . hedged around by the most ambiguous symbolism. In these cases the content of the categories is so unclear that they exist largely or only in terms of their symbolic boundaries. . . [they are] almost impossible to spell out with precision . . . But their *range* of meanings can be glossed over in a commonly accepted symbol--precisely because it allows its adherents to attach their own meanings to it. They share the symbol, but do not necessarily share its meanings. Community is just such a boundary-expressing symbol. (1985, p. 15)

Thus, I should not be surprised to learn that the variation in belief and practice among the Mennonites does not necessarily threaten the stability of the group. Even

within a religious community equipped with texts and traditions designed to address every doubt and conflict, there is ambiguity sufficient to allow for alternate meanings. "In the face of this variability of meaning," Cohen reminds us, "the consciousness of community has to be kept alive through manipulation of its symbols." (1985, p. 15)

In Chapter Three, I will consider how the larger Mennonite community, particularly in the United States, has developed different uses for its symbols as the needs of the group have changed. An examination of Mennonite scholarship reveals a particular interest among an influential intellectual elite in redefining or clarifying Mennonite identity. The reexamination of the historic "Anabaptist Vision" represents a church-wide effort to reconstruct group boundaries so as to embrace Mennonites' increasing diversity rather than to fear and resist it.

# CHAPTER III

# THE MENNONITE SYMBOLIC UNIVERSE

In order to gain a better understanding of the stories my six informants shared with me, we need to learn more about the legitimations that have traditionally helped Mennonites remember "why things are what they are." (Berger and Luckman, 1966, p. 94) One way to do this is to review Mennonite historiography for evidence of how group members have viewed their past; in the process, we can learn a great deal about what defines "Mennonite" today. Oftentimes, scholars of the tradition are themselves "natives" of it and therefore have access to their symbolic universe on both theoretical and pre-theoretical levels. In most cases they have received primary as well as secondary socialization within the Mennonite world: in addition to growing up in Mennonite families and communities, they studied in church-run schools, participated in alternative service during wars, served in organizations such as Mennonite Central Committee or Pax Service; they now teach in Mennonite colleges and Universities, and publish through Mennonite publishing houses. While this intellectual elite can hardly be considered representative of the whole Mennonite world, its importance in constructing and reinforcing the Mennonite symbolic universe is substantial and growing.

Today's Mennonite scholars and ministers (who are increasingly scholars themselves) are confronted with an inescapable reality: Mennonite communities are being flooded by the intellectual, socio-economic, and ethnic diversity of the larger

societies they inhabit. Furthermore, outsiders are not always the actual agents of change. Many "ethnic Mennonites" are marrying outside of the church, getting divorced, entering once taboo professions, questioning Mennonite doctrine, worshiping in alternative groups such as "house churches," and yet they continue to call themselves Mennonites. Even in communities that are not exposed to the outside influences so keenly felt in Newport News, church fathers still have to deal with the pluralism forced upon them by their own children (not to mention, the growing influence of wives and sisters who are becoming church mothers).

Thus, the Mennonites endure in the context of a diversity that belies the stereotypes used to identify them--even those "typifications" they use to identify themselves. Rather than seeing this purely as a product of modernization or accommodation to the host society, Mennonites are placing increasing emphasis on historical evidence of a similar diversity in their origins. The socio-cultural, ethnic and doctrinal differences existing within the tradition have long been obvious to group members. In fact, it was their desire to overcome these differences and harmonize the Mennonite family in a collective mission that led them to turn the potentially threatening agent of relativism and doubt--university scholarship--toward the study of their roots in the radical wing of the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation. It was a worthwhile risk (especially within the confines of church-run schools and publishing) because, by rehabilitating the Anabaptist identity, modern Mennonites could gain a renewed appreciation for the need to resist the dangers of modernization and secularization; they could revitalize the symbolic universe that

assured them of their peoplehood.

**The Anabaptist Vision**

In reconsidering the Mennonite heritage, researchers first concentrated on the radical nature of the Anabaptist protest. The name "Anabaptism," meaning rebaptized, was originally given to the group by its enemies, as an insulting reference to the belief in adult, "believer" baptism and the rejection of infant baptism ("Mennonite" is derived from the name of an early leader; see note 2, page 21). Because Anabaptists, like other Protestants, renounced most of the sacraments (reducing the remaining ones to symbolic acts) and proclaimed the "priesthood of all believers" (meaning that church leaders are not a special class of human being), they represented an obvious threat to the state-sponsored Catholic church. The Anabaptists' radical reinterpretation of the scriptures was threatening not only to church leadership but to the traditional faith of the majority of Christians. Even though baptism was not the only controversial issue raised, it was a prominent one because of the belief in Original Sin. In sixteenth-century Europe, the majority believed that human beings are born with the "stain" of Adam and Eve's sin. Thus, failing to bring infants into the church via baptism placed them in danger of eternal damnation. Most could not accept the Anabaptists' conviction that people are born innocent and that baptism must be reserved for those who have freely chosen to follow Jesus Christ.

The first generations of Mennonite historians emphasized that this concept of choice and the nature of that choice constituted the heart of the Anabaptist threat.

If looking to the Catholic church for forgiveness of sins was insufficient, the search for faith within the developing Lutheran church was also inadequate for "true" Christianity. Faith in God, the Anabaptists claimed, is expressed in a "change of life," modeled on the behavior and teachings of Jesus. The conduct of a Christian, therefore, should be a "witness" of Christ's lordship, an earthly manifestation of God's love. Without a commitment to change one's life, baptism is meaningless and the church member is a Christian in name only. Whether Catholic or Lutheran, the Anabaptists warned, a state church--that is, a "mass" church that the entire population is compelled to attend--cannot claim the approval of God. The radicals thus made mortal enemies of the Protestant Reformation leadership as well. In one of history's greatest ironies, the Protestant rebels who once condemned the excesses of the Catholic Church proceeded to hunt down and kill those who dared to hold the Reformation to its highest ideals. The letters of their enemies contain many references to the Anabaptists' exemplary lives; but, even as the persecutors praised them for their "pious," "spiritual," and "irreproachable" behavior, they called with increasing urgency for the destruction of these "devilish enemies and destroyers of the Church of God."[14]

Accepting unconditionally the command, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44), Anabaptists refused to take up arms when called upon to serve the state or even in order to protect themselves. As the opposition's statements testify, the Anabaptists' pacifism only added fuel to the fires of persecution. At first, martyrdom attracted many new converts to the radical vision

of primitive, apostolic Christian living; but officials responded with redoubled efforts to remove the bad element. Eventually, the survival of Anabaptist groups required many to leave their homes in search of more tolerant neighbors. Thus began the cycle of migration and resettlement which continued among the "free churches" into the twentieth century.[15]

**From the Threat of Persecution to the Dangers of Tolerance**

Today most Mennonites enjoy the very separation of church and state for which they believe their Anabaptist forefathers died. They have unprecedented freedom to practice their faith in an atmosphere of state-regulated tolerance. It has been suggested that the freedom guaranteed by tolerance is as much a curse to religion as it is a blessing. Berger (1967) discusses the results of religious tolerance with reference to an economic model: the separation of church and state "demonopolized" religion, creating a "free market" that fosters "pluralistic competition" among religious groups. As the "dynamics of consumer preference" come to shape religious organization and content, religious institutions must prove their relevance to the individual; they must demonstrate their ability to meet the moral and psychological needs of neighborhoods, families, and individual members (pp. 141-147).

Clearly, such a condition of competition threatens the taken-for-granted status religion had in the minds of believers under conditions of state-sponsored monopoly. As a result,

> Religion no longer legitimates 'the world.' Rather, different religious groups seek, by different means, to maintain their particular subworlds

> in the face of a plurality of competing subworlds. Concomitantly, this plurality of religious legitimations is internalized in consciousness as a plurality of possibilities between which one may choose. *Ipso facto*, any particular choice is relativized and less than certain (p. 152)

Because they are no longer widely shared and taken-for-granted, truths must somehow be found within the self. Berger argues that religion cannot adequately relate people to each other on a widespread basis for "the religious traditions have lost their character as overarching symbols for the society at large, which must find its integrating symbolism elsewhere." (p. 153)

There are only two responses for religious institutions: "standardization" and "marginal differentiation." While often seen as countervailing tendencies, Berger suggests that they are two sides of the same coin. First, competing religious groups may attempt to standardize "religious products" by consolidating, they may become spiritual "cartels" that seek to monopolize the market of belief. However, given the consumer pressures already in effect, such monopolistic efforts can never succeed in actually eliminating the competition. Christian ecumenism is an expression of the consolidation impulse; Berger sees in it little promise for developing into something like a world church. It has accomplished limited cooperation between groups which are independently becoming more similar in response to the standardizing force of consumer demand. The need to meet the nearly universal demand within industrialized societies for the personally meaningful religious experience is further complicated by the religious institution's need to distinguish its "product" from the competitor's. In order to balance these competing needs, religious groups may look to their "confessional heritages" for "marginal differentiation" from other faith

traditions. According to this argument, Mennonites might be seen as using the "Anabaptist Vision" in an effort to fight for their survival in the modern religious market. The implication, of course, is that such differentiation is cosmetic, a matter of "packaging" rather than true innovation (pp. 148-149).

Admittedly, this is a cold, calculating way to view the American religious scene. I suspect that Berger, writing from within both a religious and an academic world view, may have been sending a personal message between the lines of his impersonal, sociological thesis: if people want to regain the sheltering, integrative qualities of the "Sacred Canopy," they must somehow address the religious "economy" from the *demand* side rather than the supply side. Rather than seeking to change religion to meet the "needs" of the people, perhaps individual needs should be reassessed.[16] Interestingly, Mennonites seem to have responded to this logic in recent years by drawing on their radical heritage to assert the need for a profound reevaluation of Christian attitudes. Before coming to this point, however, Mennonites of all backgrounds were caught up in the "market forces" of American Protestant denominationalism.

The relative tolerance and pluralism of the American religious scene fostered experimentation and borrowing from different traditions. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, young Mennonites eagerly embraced some of the same ideas that were inspiring revivals in many American Protestant denominations. Mennonite churches began to experiment with sunday school, four-part harmony hymn singing and even musical instruments (luxuries that once had been considered

too worldly). As Mennonite youth were increasingly attracted to other churches by participation in revivals and Bible institutes, church leaders felt compelled to offer Mennonite alternatives to the outsiders' institutions and activities. Even the growth of Mennonite service organizations was based in part on the an interest in adding to the growing Protestant missionary effort the Mennonite tradition of mutual aid. The same could be said of secular matters. Mennonite newspapers served the dual purposes of promoting intragroup communication and providing an alternative to secular or mainstream Protestant sources of information. As we shall see in Chapter Four, Mennonites in the Newport News colony provided opportunities for their youth to develop their own singing groups and a "literary society" in order for them to practice community with peers as well as to provide alternatives to mainstream youth culture. As important as such institutions and materials were for preserving the group by slowing attrition, something more was needed if the Mennonites were to retain the sense of being *a people* and bearers of a particular faith tradition. The atmosphere in modern America was threatening the continued existence of the group with its very tolerance; absent the traditional avoidance of outsiders, Mennonites were beginning to look very much like their North American neighbors and, in some ways, they were also beginning to think and act like them.

It was under these circumstances that Anabaptism was revisited with renewed vigor. The logic of this restored interest in being unique might have been expressed this way: It is wonderful that the separation of church and state has helped Americans gain the freedom to experiment with different expressions of faith, but

Mennonites should not forget that the notion of free churches and free choice was originally part of the "Anabaptist Vision." As heirs of this tradition, Mennonites have a special mission not to forget the full implications of the free church movement. This is essentially the argument of Historian Howard Bender in the 1944 article that made "Anabaptist Vision" a key phrase in Mennonite scholarship. Fearing absorption into Protestant denominationalism, historians of this era set out not only to correct the tarnished image of Anabaptism painted by centuries of prejudiced critics, but to renew Mennonites' sense of continuing the Anabaptist mission. Bender wrote:

> The Anabaptist vision was not a detailed blueprint for the reconstruction of human society, but the Brethren did believe that Jesus intended that the Kingdom of God should be set up in the midst of earth, here and now, and this they proposed to do forthwith. We shall not believe, they said, that the Sermon on the Mount or any other vision that He had is only a heavenly vision meant but to keep His followers in tension until the last great day, but we shall practice what He taught, believing that . . . we can by His grace follow in His steps. (1944, p. 88)

**A New "Usable Past"**

The next generation of Mennonite historians, although critical of the "Bender thesis," did not challenge its central notion: that Mennonites continue to recognize themselves as having a unique approach to Christian faith based primarily on discipleship. Rather, they have tried to break down barriers that might tend to divide Mennonites and to block the entry of new members. Thus, instead of glossing over the socio-cultural and ideological irregularities among the early Anabaptists, they have suggested that any monolithic "Anabaptist Vision" or "Mennonite Way" is more a recent construction than a historical fact. Influenced by the methods and

assumptions of the New Social History, such scholars have found evidence that Anabaptist groups developed independently in different geographic areas and in urban as well as rural environments. The new evidence called into question the older scholarship which supported a long-held assumption: that Anabaptism originated among the Swiss Brethren and south German groups. Spreading from this center, the faith was supposed to have been misinterpreted and misapplied by strangers who had their own agendas. With this explanation, Mennonites had been able to gain distance from groups that had been dubbed Anabaptist in the sixteenth century but who clearly demonstrated by their participation in riots such as the "Münster Rebellion" (northern Germany, 1533-35) that they did not deserve comparison with the true martyrs of the Radical Reformation (Redekop, 1989).

This "monogenesis" thesis is seen by some current historians as having conveniently supported the ideological dominance of Swiss/South German Mennonites. This ethnic subgroup practiced the faith in ways that formed the stereotype for all Mennonites: traditionally, they lived in small isolated communities, avoiding outsiders' changing styles of dress, thought and behavior because they considered such concerns un-Christian--marks of human pride. Seeing themselves as "called out" from the secular world, adherents of the "Two Kingdom" doctrine adopt a stance of nonresistance to the state (for the most part, they pay taxes and follow state regulations) but refrain from participation in it (voting, running for office, military service) (Redkop, 1989). Since they were the first Mennonites to settle in America and they had been established here for two hundred years before

other Mennonite subgroups arrived, the Swiss/South Germans had long been able to claim their Way as *the* Mennonite Way. Equipped with evidence apparently supportive of their belief that the "true" Anabaptists originated in their homeland, their vision seemed to gain validation as the direct inheritance of *the* "Anabaptist Vision."

Other Mennonite groups, particularly ones originating in the Netherlands and North Germany then settling in Eastern Europe and Russia at the turn of the eighteenth century, have a somewhat different history of separation from their host societies. While originally opposed to involvement in secular government, their adoption of many secular governing practices within their own communities eventually made them more tolerant of involvement with the outside world. Having lived in little commonwealths separate from the host society but more parallel to it, Mennonites of Dutch/Russian background have proven to be more interested in cooperative, evangelical involvement both within the Mennonite tradition and with outsiders. Intra-Mennonite cooperative efforts have been hampered, however, by the strong sense of identity cultivated among the more numerous and better established Swiss/South Germans. As a result of cultural and doctrinal differences between them, divisions nurtured by the passage of time and the effort to institutionalize, these two ethnic subgroups became substantially polarized in the first half of this century (Juhnke, 1989). Throughout this time, the feeling of incompatibility has only been intensified by the two groups' differing orientations toward mainstream North American culture.

Then historians offered a new perspective on the situation. Scholars of sixteenth-century Anabaptism began to draw attention to mounting evidence that some the radical reformers remained in cities such as Amsterdam for centuries, first as an underground movement, later as a tolerated minority and, eventually, as a recognized religious group (Stayer, et al., 1975; Krahn, 1981; Kauffman and Driedger, 1991: 28). To some, the fact that Anabaptism could successfully be practiced in the cities over such a long period suggested that there was nothing inherently isolationist about the Mennonite belief system; this new perspective suggested that rural isolation and physical separation from the World (theologically legitimated by the "Two Kingdom Doctrine") might be seen as a product of the Swiss/South German experience of persecution rather than a requirement of the faith. Furthermore, the Dutch/Russian involvement with the world might then be seen as a natural manifestation of the belief in being Christ's witnesses on earth rather than some aberration of Mennonite history. Perhaps, there is a legitimate precedent not only for the modern diversity of church membership but also for the notion that Mennonites can provide the cities with a needed witness to the Gospel of peace.

One author recently appealed to such a notion, calling for Mennonites to overcome the "temptation . . . to form our own private alumni clubs whose mission is to relive or react against our rural upbringing." Significantly, he asserts that the Mennonite peace witness is needed not only in the city but in the suburbs and that bringing peace calls for more than gun control:

> For reconciliation to take place between the suburbs and the city . . . there must also be disarmament from "us and them" mentality, from

> the need to control and possess, from the need to be superior, from the need to have enemies, and from inordinate love of privacy . . . Both sides must be disarmed of the need to fix blame. (Swora, 1992, p. 2)

Mennonites, with their historic devotion to peace and their "tradition of mutual aid," have much to offer; but they have just as much to learn from the inhabitants of cities. By coming together, this outreach worker insists, Mennonites can renew their mission:

> As long as we are moving into the cities, we can do so for more than just jobs and education. We can join the reign of God for reconciliation. We can find new friends who treat us to insights and experiences we would miss in more homogeneous communities. We can evangelize and watch our Anabaptist vision take on new cultural expressions among new Mennonites. (p. 3)

Before Mennonites could progress to the point where they might view the Anabaptist Vision this way, they had to overcome the legacies of division. The Swiss/South German claim to special authenticity, whether spoken or unspoken, was for decades expressed institutionally by the older group's dominance of higher education and publishing (Juhnke, 1989). Even the name adopted for the predominantly Swiss/South German national organization claims primacy: officially, it is called the Mennonite Church (MC). Since the name implies that there is in fact only one Mennonite church, writers often refer to this group as the "Old Mennonite Church" or the "Old Mennonites."[17] Understandably, there has been some resentment of "Old Mennonite" dominance within the Mennonite world; differences in worship and lifestyle between the ethnic subgroups made it difficult at first to bridge the institutional divisions that have developed over the years. Interestingly,

the answer to the problem appears to lie in the same appeal to history that helped exaggerate it in the past.

Now that Anabaptism is fixed in the Mennonite symbolic universe, the language of Anabaptism is more readily available for *all* Mennonites to use. As we saw in Chapter Two, Cohen (1985) articulates an understanding of symbolic interactionism that emphasizes the versatility of symbols: they exercise power in the imaginations of individuals only to the extent that they can "carry" a variety of meanings. A thing, a person or an idea becomes a powerful symbol when people can easily assign their own meanings to it. Given this understanding of "symbolic construction," we can gain a greater appreciation for why the symbolism of the Anabaptist Vision, whatever its origin, has proven to be as powerful a tool in the hands of those seeking greater intra-group cooperation as it was in the hands of those seeking to promote their own subgroup's interpretation of what "Mennonite" should mean.

Accordingly, institutions promulgating the symbolism of Anabaptism have been pivotal in bringing Mennonites together just as they played a role in dividing them earlier in the century. Cooperation began when Mennonites moved the practice of mutual aid traditional within individual communities (a necessity as much as a conviction in the face of historic persecution) into institutional settings where all Mennonite groups could benefit. The insurance cooperative, Mennonite Mutual Aid, is the prime example of this. Perhaps the greatest opportunities for Pan-Mennonite cooperation have been provided by Mennonite Central Committee

(MCC) and Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) which bring together members of most of the groups (including some Old Order Amish and Mennonite communities) in order to serve the needs of Mennonites *and* non-Mennonites at home and abroad. In recent years, the networks and partnerships begun within these organizations have encouraged the two biggest Mennonite groups--the Mennonite Church and the General Conference Mennonite Church (GC)--to discuss the possibility of consolidation.

Within the microcosm of the Newport News Colony, many of the historical trends discussed thus far have shaped Mennonite community and identity. The experiences of this group offer many insights into the transformation of Mennonite society.

**The Newport News Colony**

The community I studied is notable for several reasons. First, having been settled in 1897, it is still new in comparison to settlements in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana. With apparently few exceptions, most of the settlers migrated from established "Old Mennonite" communities in the North and Midwest.[18] Few extended families settled the colony. Unrelated Mennonites were alerted to the opportunity in Virginia by advertisements in church newspapers. Thus, a new community was formed as the land in the colony was resold over the first ten years. Importantly, old communities and old relationships were left behind, perhaps clearing some ground for adventurous families to practice their faith and their lives according to the demands of "frontier" living rather than strict adherence to tradition.

The colony was settled on the Warwick River, upstream from the growing port city of Newport News which provided the Mennonites with a healthy market for their goods. The colony's 1,200 acres were devoted not only to grain, corn and vegetables, but also to dairy farming, poultry raising and fruit growing. In this sense, the colony was more similar to average American farming communities of the past than to 19th and 20th-century American religious communes. Land was always privately owned and communal activities such as barn-raisings and corn-huskings were considered opportunities for brotherly and sisterly cooperation, rather than being stated obligations of group membership.[19]

The colony's location was a major factor shaping its future. At the turn of the century, most of the South was still considered isolated and backward. Who could have guessed that the South would grow so much in the twentieth century? Were the settlers even thinking that far ahead? More to the point, would they have settled there if they had known that, even then, the military recognized the great strategic value of the deep, well-protected ports on the James River? Perhaps no one in the group could have predicted that someday their children would be surrounded by the army, navy, and, eventually, the air force. In a supreme stroke of irony, the army used a small island in the Warwick River to test munitions. In the course of two world wars, the Mennonites lived with the sound of gunfire echoing in their ears. As they felt their homes shake from the force of the blasts, some must have wondered how long they could stand living in the midst of a war machine. Others decided this could indeed be an ideal place to give "witness" to their belief in peace.[20] During

the First World War, soldiers were invited to eat in several Mennonite homes and to attend Sunday services. But, by the Second World War, some Mennonite families were moving to more isolated environs and selling or renting their property to military families.

In addition to geography, the colony was shaped by the great struggle over the growing influence of modernism and liberalism in turn-of-the-century American society. Many Christians, including Mennonites, responded to the influence of Kantian rationalism and Darwinian evolutionary thought with growing fundamentalism and revivalism. This "Third Great Awakening", as it has been called, won the hearts and caught the imagination of young people who came of age in the 1880s and '90s.[21] Many of these young people became leaders in their churches during the early twentieth century. One such leader was George R. Brunk, Sr. (1871-1938), who lived in the colony and served as Bishop of the Mennonite Southeast Virginia Conference. His far-reaching influence was assured by the part he took in the founding and early administration of Eastern Mennonite College in Harrisonburg, Virginia and his founding of a new, more conservative newspaper (Sword and Trumpet) after his writings became less welcome in the Old Mennonite organ, The Gospel Herald (H. A. Brunk, 1972). Both Martha and Kate spoke respectfully of his great influence on the local community but did so with an almost apologetic tone. The resulting impression was that they appreciated their opportunity to live in the "strong community" he helped build but they would not have wanted to be held to his strict standards themselves.[22] In fact, the history of the community since his

death can be seen as the opposition of two tendencies: on the one hand, there is a collective paying of respect to the unity he fought for and, on the other, a growing tendency of individuals, especially young people, to chip away at the structure he developed in order to maintain that unity.

At the time of its fiftieth anniversary in 1947, approximately 115 Mennonite families lived in the colony. As many of the farmers sold their land, the colony became a popular residential area. The occupational makeup of the community shifted toward the trades and small businesses, productive work that had always attracted a respectable minority. Growing numbers of Mennonite building contractors and building supply companies contributed to the suburbanization of former Mennonite farmland. Many of the new homes were purchased by men and women stationed at the Peninsula's numerous military bases.[23] In the past, community members had tended to socialize and marry within the group but, as the building progressed and the city enveloped the once isolated community, the Mennonites were increasingly exposed to outsiders. Within twenty years, the ratio of church members to non-church members in the area had shifted; the remaining members of the community now had at least as many non-Mennonite neighbors as Mennonite ones.

Today, only the church buildings serve as visual reminders of the Mennonite community; they are spiritual and social centers for the increasingly scattered community of church members. Furthermore, a substantial portion of the membership of the Mennonite congregations in the area is not descended from the

original settlers. There are among the new membership some who grew up in other Mennonite communities, but the majority are not "ethnic" Mennonites at all; these newcomers bring with them some of the practices and assumptions gained from a variety of other cultural and religious backgrounds.[24] Perhaps the most perplexing development is that a handful of military families are active in these churches. While none have sought membership, their presence prompted the congregations to collaborate in the process of clarifying their position on the baptism and membership of military personnel. Given the very strong "peace position" of the Mennonite faith, it is not surprising that this development has sparked a major debate. In fact, the debate has reached the national level within the church, giving this community the dubious distinction of being a "situation". (B:32)

**A Community of Belief**

The community I have studied was once geographically defined, isolated in a sparsely populated area. When first settled it was substantially cut off from the outside world by its distance from port cities to the south and east and by a river and an un-bridged creek to the west and north. Those individuals who came to the area from established Mennonite communities in the North and the Midwest to start a colony in the "temperate" South sought separation but not complete isolation as they needed to sell their agricultural products in the markets downriver. Significantly, the colonists were of Swiss/South German descent and the Warwick congregation they started is affiliated with the "Old Mennonite Church" (MC). Their children and grandchildren, with few exceptions, married within the group, keeping alive some of

their German heritage.[25] Inhabitants of the colony were connected to each other by ties of kinship and life-time friendship, by shared experiences in and outside church. Not only were they geographically and emotionally "close," but they were also clearly distinctive to outsiders because of their plain dress and modest behavior.

Today, the physically bounded, visible Mennonite community no longer exists in the Denbigh neighborhood of Newport News. The interaction of "ethnic" Mennonites with a substantial number of new church members who grew up in different religious and cultural traditions has made necessary public debate and private deliberations about the competing needs of "opening the door" to new members and maintaining ideological and behavioral boundaries. The tension inspired by the increased presence not only of non-Mennonites in general but of the military in particular has made especially salient the nationally popular question of Mennonite identity. What determines identity now that community is no longer maintained by the daily contact of neighbors who depend upon each other for their material as well as their spiritual survival? There is no longer one strong local leader who sets standards and holds the line against secularization. So how do the Newport News Mennonites establish what is *not* Mennonite today? Under such conditions, it is difficult for outsiders to discern a community per se, a fact freely admitted by some of my informants. Still, as we shall see in Chapters Four and Five, those who belong to the Warwick District congregations continue to experience community. Whether they refer to the Mennonite population as "this community" or qualify the spiritual and emotional value of church membership as being "a sense of community,"

the community of which my informants spoke is a cherished state of mind, a reality constructed by people who share salient symbols. "Community" is itself one of these symbols as well as a vehicle for other valued symbols.

As we have seen, Mennonites at the turn of the nineteenth century felt a need to regain their radical past because the North American experience of denominationalism was threatening their identity as a people with a distinctive Vision of Christianity. Can it be simple coincidence that subsequent generations of professional historians, having grown up during an era when Mennonites did *not* universally reject all the trappings of modernity, found in the same radical tradition evidence of an early diversity among Anabaptists? The picture of urban Anabaptists who lived within the "World" while "witnessing" to their beliefs contrasts sharply with the long-cherished image of rural separation and a renunciation of the secular world. With evidence that believers in the Anabaptist tradition have not always kept to themselves, a new interpretation seemed possible: perhaps the Swiss/South German understanding of the Two Kingdom Doctrine was shaped primarily by the history of persecution in those regions; perhaps differences in the streams of Anabaptism were not the result of modernization and the decline of the one "Mennonite Way," but had their roots in the earliest days of the movement. Here was legitimation for the reconstruction of Mennonite peoplehood based on factors other than the doctrines and practices of one ethnic subgroup. Here were new words and images for the Mennonite symbolic universe, taken from a broader reading of the group's shared beginnings.

# CHAPTER IV

## MEMORIES AND LEGACIES: THE NEWPORT NEWS COLONY

The Newport News Mennonites tell revealing stories about the transition from an "Old Mennonite" way of life to a twentieth-century urban Anabaptist "witness". By listening carefully as locals communicate their experience of identity and community, it is possible to glimpse the process by which Mennonites rearrange their symbolic universe. This process is based on appropriating language for communicating powerful old ideas in new places and times.

### Identity

Martha spoke of experiences in her childhood and youth that not only helped her learn who she was but also made her happy with that identity:

> I liked who I was, I liked living here and being that person. I liked being a Mennonite. I had friends who didn't. I claimed it and I thought I was fortunate. I think it was because it wasn't so much imposed on me . . . I thought I was pretty lucky. (B:3)

As an adult, Martha has been interested in the colony's history, a hobby that seems to have grown in part out of her experiences recording it (she helped type the anniversary book, Fifty Years Building on the Warwick, interviewed some of the colony's founders for an oral history project in the 1970s, and she has reported for the community newspaper for many years). Her interest in identity seems intimately linked with her historian impulses. It was clear she had given thought to the subject of Mennonite identity long before our conversation. After answering some preliminary questions about her immediate family tree, the first thing she told me

about herself and her childhood was, in fact, the statement above: "I liked who I was."

Martha not only traced her own identity-history but she also tried to pinpoint experiences that shaped her children's identities. She asked her daughter and some of her daughter's friends when they were high school students, "Do you feel Mennonite when you're in school?" As she recalls, they agreed that they did. Were the young people simply being respectful? Possibly. Many from that generation did move away from the community and some have not remained in the Mennonite faith. Martha accepted that they were answering truthfully at the time but she did not take their formation of a Mennonite identity for granted. "I was curious about why," she mused as she thought about the girls' answer. "To me, their appearance was not different, but, to them, there were subtle differences. Probably their dress was not--they may have been conscious of it--but it didn't quite have the label appearance of their peers'." [B:16-17]

Interestingly, Martha began thinking about identity by considering how three basic factors affected her own history: "When we went to high school, we looked different, we felt different, and didn't share the same experiences with the other people." [B:16] Her comparison of her own experience with that of her daughter's generation suggests that distinctive dress and the sharing of pastimes separate from those of the majority are probably necessary but somehow insufficient to form a Mennonite identity. How did dress and behavior change and how did a different appearance and separate activities translate into a Mennonite identity for some and

not for others? Martha and Kate both told memorable stories that suggest at least partial answers to these questions. As we consider their stories, we should keep in mind what Martha next said about the less visible forces at work in forming an identity. She drew attention to the attitudes that perhaps contributed the most toward the construction of boundaries when she remarked, "They [her daughter's generation] would have had an accountability not only to their parents but also to their church or community of faith that probably many of the kids in school did not have." (B:17)

**Choice and Commitment**

During my conversations with Martha and Kate, I was struck immediately by the role choice seems to have played in the Mennonites' church and community membership. The social organization of the group appears to have encouraged choice as often as it limited it. In principle, the support of individual decision is centered on religious commitment, but, in practice, the exercise of choice is no longer limited to the decision to follow Christ. Fresh in the community's memory are the admonitions of the authoritarian Bishop George R. Brunk, the First who, in the 1910s, '20s and '30s, tried faithfully to hold the group to the "ordinances" and "restrictions" outlined by Old Mennonite leader Daniel Kauffman in 1898.[26] In particular, Bishop Brunk stressed plain dress for both "brothers" and "sisters", the prayer covering for women, and the renunciation of secular radio (see Chapter Three, p. 32 and Note 22, p.84). Although respected by everyone, Bishop Brunk was a controversial figure (H. A. Brunk, 1972).[27] His was always an uphill battle and,

in the end, overt restrictions yielded to subtler methods of maintaining group solidarity.

While the attitudes toward choice recounted in my informants' stories have a parallel in the Anabaptist tradition, *individual* Mennonites were not as free to exercise choice in all aspects of their lives until the influence of modernizing host societies changed personal expectations. It is only under the conditions of tolerance and unprecedented individual freedom that Mennonites have been faced with the full implications of their free church tradition; the right of faith communities to chart their own courses now shares the stage with a growing sense of individual rights. Still, in the Newport News colony, choice has been tempered by a sense of commitment. Both Kate and Martha spoke of the ways choice and commitment hinge on each other as they and their families, friends and neighbors negotiate a path between the demands of the individual and the group, between the church and the larger community. Perhaps, by looking at these attitudes and considering how they were formed, we may gain an appreciation of how Mennonites "locate themselves" in their tradition, how they learn both the meanings and the uses of the symbols in the Mennonite universe.

As Martha's earlier observation reminds us, not everyone "claims" the identity suggested or provided by the environment into which he or she is born. The Mennonites are no different; several of Martha and Kate's friends and family members never quite developed identities that undeniably place them within the Mennonite tradition. Again, Martha suggested one possible explanation: she did not

feel a Mennonite identity had been "imposed" on her, rather, she felt fortunate to be *who* she was and, as suggested by her loving stories of the colony, she was glad to be *where* she was. Even though people are born having little control over who and where they are, this condition can change as they mature. Culture plays a major role in determining the range of options available to those socialized within its bounds. We might therefore ask how the Newport News colony developed the culture which has allowed some members to retain their commitment to it while living in a modern, urban world driven by a different set of motivations. Since neither Martha nor Kate advocates unlimited freedom, the question becomes, where does healthy self-respect end and disrespect for one's community begin? More often for women than for men, this debate has found symbolic expression in the issue of personal appearance, especially dress.

**Distinctive Dress: Debating Symbols**

Kate spoke with great admiration of her teacher in the Mennonite day school: "She dressed plainly, she even wore black stockings and everything but she was a very independent thinker, a very educated woman in the arts and sciences and a very, very good teacher." (C:8) Living in a time of changing mores, Kate has come to view this trusted model of Mennonite womanhood with some ambivalence. When she went to the Mennonite day school, her teacher's style of dress probably seemed very natural. However, in later years, as she confronted the issue of Mennonite dress herself, she seems to have formed a nagging feeling that her teacher's traditional dress, right down to her black stockings, tied her to negative notions such as isolation

and ignorance.[28] Simultaneously, Kate realizes that traditional appearance symbolizes commitment, an attitude she prizes. This is the dilemma I perceive in her words and I think it is instructive. Within the debate over traditional dress, we witness the tension between choice and commitment as well as their potential for complementing each other.

Martha also made some important discoveries as a result of contemplating the issue of dress. There was a quiet pride in Martha's voice when she told me of her mother: "She was a person who knew what she was about. She made up her own mind about things." (B:2) Martha seems to feel great satisfaction in knowing that her widowed mother was so self-possessed. But even when she was young, she realized her mother was a little different. Even though her mother was "a traditional person," she "did not particularly agree with everything" traditionally expected of Mennonite women. (B:3) For example, her mother chose to dress Martha and her sister not in the customary plain garb of the Mennonites but according to the style for little American girls in the '30s and '40s: "with Shirley Temple hair," and little dresses that were "*really* short!" (B:6) When Martha later showed an interest in adopting the Mennonite look (braided hair, long sleeves, calf-length dresses, and brown stockings), her mother stressed the seriousness of the decision: "She made it clear that if this is what you're choosing, you must be loyal." Martha had in her mother a model of choice and commitment; even though she was someone who "made up her own mind about things," she was also a "very faithful person." (B:3)

Because of her mother's preferences, it took Martha a while to identify dress

as an important issue. At first, she did not notice she looked different from the other Mennonite girls. When she started school at the public elementary, her special friend was not Mennonite.[29] Two years later, when this best buddy moved away and Martha was feeling somewhat cast adrift, three girls who "dressed a little different from the other girls" approached her saying, "'You should really be our friend. You are a Mennonite.'" This was the first step toward her new interpretation of herself: "I thought, 'Ooo. Alright.' You know, it was a time I needed a friend and so at that point I had a Mennonite identity. But I really didn't know I was a Mennonite until then." (B:5) Later that year, she read an old Mennonite history book that reinforced this revelation. "I only read it because I had nothing else to read," she laughed, "I was desperate that summer for reading." (B:3) Her self-image soon gained new dimensions: "Then I went into the fourth grade and met Virginia history. I remember thinking how fortunate I was. 'I'm an American, and I'm a Virginian, and I'm a Mennonite.' I couldn't imagine being more fortunate than that!" (B:3)

The prayer covering worn by Mennonite women is perhaps the most symbolic aspect of the group's dress. Often, it is also the most controversial. Having been given the same status as baptism and communion by the Old Mennonite leadership in its effort to codify doctrine (see Note 27, page 92), the covering became a nexus for debate over the need for distinctive dress. The prayer covering takes several forms but is generally a white, crisp, net bonnet with ties that hang down. Reminiscent of the caps worn by sixteenth-century European women, it is a link to

both scripture (I Corinthians 11.5: ". . . any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonors her head . . . ") and to the Mennonites' roots in Anabaptism. It is not difficult to imagine why many modern women, even those brought up in the Mennonite tradition, might take exception to this symbol. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians that,"The head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God." (I Cor 11.3) Thus, by having her head uncovered when addressing God, a woman "dishonors her head," that is, her husband, and symbolically upsets the chain of commitments between human beings and God. The covering is, therefore, a mandated symbol of the sacred hierarchy honored in ancient times. It is actually a symbol on top of a symbol for Paul also writes: "Does not nature itself teach you that for a man to wear long hair is degrading to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is her pride? For her hair is given to her for a covering." (I Cor 11.14 & 15)

While Paul reminds the early Christians that, "in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman," the bottom line is that women must cover their heads for, "we [Christians] recognize no other practice." (I Cor 11.11 & 16) From these statements, Mennonites have historically understood that women are to keep their hair long, in plain styles such as two braids for young girls and pinned-up styles such as buns for women. The prayer covering is intended for baptized members of the church and is usually worn on the back of the head, over the bun. It continues to be one of the signs of Mennonite and Amish groups most recognizable to outsiders. Any compromise on these aspects of dress might therefore

be seen, at least on one level, as a signal of the growing modern sensibilities of twentieth-century Mennonites, a sign that they increasingly identify with values promoted by the host society.[30]

It seems that for much of the local community's history, the prayer covering has been viewed ambivalently. During most of this century, there remained several aspects of appearance which were less open to debate (hair length, makeup and flashy clothing, for example). But, even in the colony's early years, the church did not *require* women to wear the prayer covering at all times. Although it was customary in Newport News until sometime in the 1980s to wear the covering at church meetings, it was voluntary outside of church.[31] When Martha first faced the issue of whether to wear the covering in the early 1940s, she and a friend debated the pluses and minuses (they "couldn't come up with many pluses"). As the girls saw it, wearing the covering "was not a church rule" but it was a "statement," a signal of one's "undying loyalty to the true principles" of the church. She thinks it is "interesting" that, rather than discussing the matter with their parents or the minister, they went to her friend's aunt. Martha remembers: "We were aware that she made up her own mind about things," and "of course, we chose someone that we thought may tell us what we wanted to know." (B:10) Even though they craved some adult validation, the girls had already made up their minds; in spite of the fact that most of their friends chose to wear the covering, Martha and her friend did not.

Kate was confronted with the dilemma when she was attending public high school in the late '50s. She was influenced even more directly by other adults in the

community. Although her mother certainly had some input, the deciding factor for Kate was the fact that her friends' parents were encouraging their girls to wear the covering to school. Significantly, the argument used was not, "Do as I say." Instead, she remembers, they asked the girls, "What are the people in the other [Mennonite] community going to think if some do and some don't [wear the covering]? We need to be consistent." (C:7) In this case, the young people were not left entirely to their own devices. Still, it appears that the parents' less strident approach was successful mainly because the focus of the argument was on the duties of church membership (something the girls chose) rather than the duties of children to their parents (membership in a family being, of course, largely involuntary for young children). This is not to say that the girls did not act out of a sense of obligation to their parents. It simply provides an example of what may have been the parents' preference to avoid open conflict while emphasizing the girls' responsibility to fulfill the promises they made when they chose to become members of the church. While the need to show consistency may not have seemed terribly important to the girls, the implied notions of loyalty and commitment were very meaningful. These ideals exercised their power not in the abstract but to the extent that they were embodied in cherished relationships, and thereby associated with respected adults and best buddies. Wanting to support her friends and maintain some group solidarity but seeing little justification for the covering *aside* from its implications for her community, Kate stumbled on to a compromise: she wore it to school but, after taking it off for her morning physical education class, she did not put it back on.

(C:7)

Kate mentioned one instance in which she and her sisters did "hold out" completely. It involved the home-sewn "cape" that Mennonite women of previous generations had worn over their dresses "for modesty." Kate recalled that she kept saying to her mother, "'There's no reason to have to do that. Why can't you just buy a normal shirtwaist dress or something that's just got long sleeves?'" (C:6) It was perfectly clear to Kate that she could wear store-bought clothes which would be more acceptable to her peers in the public high school and still satisfy her obligation to dress modestly. This logic was probably difficult to resist, especially in view of adult weaknesses in the area of traditional dress. By mid-century, the men in the colony had all but given up on wearing plain black suits without lapels and plain white shirts without collars (a combination reminiscent of a priest's black shirt and white collar). Considering the fact that most of the men Martha and Kate knew were virtually indistinguishable in appearance from their non-Mennonite neighbors, it must have been increasingly difficult to insist that young people continue the practice of wearing plain, distinctive dress throughout the week.

Even though adult women continued to dress traditionally after their husbands and brothers abandoned the practice, they too were slowly succumbing to the allure of ready-made clothes at this time of great change in the colony. Her mother, in Kate's opinion, was stricter than most of her friends' parents, but she was sufficiently liberated to order some of her clothes from a catalog. This in itself was no sin. However, Kate recalls that in one "moment of weakness," her mother ordered a

questionable outfit: a plaid circular skirt with a reversible vest. Immediately, her daughters wanted to try it on. Kate burst into laughter as she told me about her mother's reaction: "She must have decided that after all she had overstepped the bounds; it was just a little too cute! And it kept disappearing!" (C:6)

While basically resigned to dressing "modestly," Kate still longed for "a little bit of lace." Of course, she knew "that would be too worldly." Even something as simple as mixing different blouses and skirts was not part of the Mennonite way. "Oh," she told me, "it would be so embarrassing to think that I had to wear clothes that were kind of out-of-style and just looked like something maybe an old lady would wear!" (C:6) In one surprising episode of impulse-shopping, when she was eleven years old, Kate bought some red nail polish. (C:32) This would have been *completely* unacceptable for her to wear; as lenient as the community was on some subjects, there was no room for discussion on the topic of makeup. She laughs now about the impossibility of her choice. Even if she had wanted to have something to wear outside the community, rock-hard nail enamel was certainly not very practical for secret experiments with high fashion (she did not know about nail polish remover at that time). Still, she took the forbidden polish home, hid it, and forgot about it--until her little brother used it to paint on the windows! What a vivid reminder of the consequences rash choices can have! Still, the story would not have been charming had Kate actually painted her nails for that really would have constituted a more serious challenge, even a lack of respect. This was clearly not her intention. Kate looked upon non-Mennonite culture wistfully enough to buy red nail polish, but not

enough to wear it. Today, her appearance is neat and comparatively modest. While nothing she wears would identify her specifically as a Mennonite, the conspicuous absence of makeup, attention-getting styles, and ornate jewelry places her securely within the community's definition of acceptable Mennonite appearance.

These stories suggest that, in dealing with changes outside and within the community, everyone had to make concessions from time to time. Still, it appears that parents compromised more often than their children did. Parents probably did not feel they were *choosing* to back down but, in making such compromises, they gave their children chances to assert *their* preferences. Again, dress was the focus of many minor struggles between the Mennonite way and that of the larger society. Precisely because the Warwick District children had so much contact with people outside their own community, dress was the most visible and potentially embarrassing sign of being different. This was especially true when Kate and her sisters were growing up.[32] In Kate's case, the prayer covering compromise and her refusal to wear the cape were the closest she came to rebellion while she was living at home. In several cases, she did not choose to challenge group traditions. For example, she managed to wear the gym shorts her mother altered for modesty (she sewed a little skirt around them), answering her classmates' embarrassing questions patiently and calming herself with the thought that she had legitimate reasons for being different ("You just kind of took refuge in the fact that this was your church group and this is the way you were." [C:9]) Such explanations helped get her through her daily routine but did not *always* neutralize the embarrassment of standing out in a crowd.

She now regrets that she decided not to participate in a junior high track meet, partly because, at the time, she could not imagine competing in a skirt! (C:11)

When she went Eastern Mennonite College at age 16, Kate chose and paid for her own clothes. Still, her choices would have been constrained by the relatively conservative, Mennonite environment she was in at EMC. Furthermore, she was making these decisions at a time (in the early 1960s) when teenagers in the larger society more closely conformed to their parents' expectations. With Kate's younger sisters, it was a different story. They went to public high school in the late '60s and early '70s when mini-skirts (and challenging authority) were in fashion. Kate laughed as she told me how "busy" her sisters kept her mother: "When she did the laundry, she would let down hems! She said, 'Even a half inch helps.'" (C:33) It was a losing battle. Also in style at that time were knee-length skirts that could be rolled up at the waist and covered with a sweater for a last-minute fashion update. So Kate's sisters could leave the house looking (minimally) acceptable to their mother but, on their arrival at school, they could transform themselves into mainstream American girls. As Kate pointed out, Mennonite parents were now dealing with the same changes and challenges that non-Mennonite parents faced at the time. Both Kate and Martha's experiences suggest that parental compromise was the rule rather than the exception.

Some of these compromises allowed Martha and Kate the freedom to decide whether to conform to some of their group's most symbolic practices. An outsider might question how their parents could have allowed this and still have hoped to

maintain their cohesive, protective community life. But, for these two women, the less strident approach proved the most effective. The extent to which Martha and Kate seem to combine a basic respect for choice with a strong commitment to their group prompted me to think about the ways in which these attitudes work with and against each other among the Mennonites. While "choice" in the extreme implies individualism and "commitment" implies more communal motivations, these terms do not necessarily represent polar opposites. On the contrary, the stories told by these urban Mennonites illustrate the important role choice can play in making and keeping commitments, as well as the possibilities for remaining committed to one's heritage and community while living in a modern, more individualistic world.

**Leisure and the Media: Maintaining a Separate Culture**

As suggested by Martha and Kate's experiences with distinctive dress, young people were confronted by their group identity most vividly during their week-day experiences among non-Mennonite as well as Mennonite peers. In large part, it was the juxtaposition of school and school-related activities with Mennonite community activities, especially during the high school years, which stimulated young people to think about what it meant to be Mennonite. Both Martha and Kate have fond memories of socializing with their Mennonite friends in the colony. Both had friends outside the colony at different times but ended up spending more time with neighbors and cousins. While they never felt like social outcasts at school, there was such a great degree of comfort within their *own* group that relations with others must

have seemed strained in comparison.

One of the most beloved activities shared by Mennonite youth was singing in three- or four-part harmony. Children were taught early how to read music so they could sing harmony together unaccompanied by musical instruments. Martha was able to sing this way with her friends by the fourth grade. Young peole used singing practice as an enjoyable way of getting to know each other better. (B:8) Thus, music served to knit together maturing Mennonites in their own youth culture, separating them from other young people who, even if they were disposed to sing this way, probably lacked the training to join in easily. Functionally, music seems to support the notion of Mennonite identity. It helps set the group apart from Protestant denominations because few congregations have so many members trained in music and their hymn tradition seems to share few melodies with the major Protestant churches. Mennonite singing also seems extremely symbolic. In form and content, it represents community as Mennonites have traditionally understood it: different voices are harmonized by training and life-long practice; the hymns and songs are a common language group members can share simultaneously. Importantly, the music is not limited to one melodic line, that is to say, Mennonites do not limit themselves to unison singing. Harmony might therefore be seen as symbolic of the effort to balance the individual and the group within their culture.

The literary society was another youth activity that several generations enjoyed. This tradition was established by a group of young people in 1904. An author contributing to the Fiftieth Anniversary community history proudly states that

"literaries" were active for all but twelve years of the colony's existence (Warwick River Mennonite Church, 1947:69). Contrary to the name, it does not appear that the participants in these groups discussed literature. The groups seem, at least in the early years, to have been debating clubs. The young people elected officers (president, secretary and critic) and organized programs including debates and, for example, a recitation. Some early topics were, "Resolved: That Intemperance causes more misery than War," and "Anticipation is more pleasant than realization." The generation to which the author of this article belonged seems to have expanded its range of topics even further:

> We delved into the earth and studied a lowly grain of salt; we soared among the stars; we kept pace with the world war (1); we gained first hand information from . . . [community members] about reconstruction work in Europe . . . we compared the economic values of wheat and the cow . . . we considered a radical reform of the public school system . . . we debated the question as to which was of more importance to civilization, the battle of Marathon or the battle of Metaurus . . . we compared the military achievements of Napoleon Bonaparte and Julius Caesar; twice we debated the question Resolved: that the United States has Reached the Zenith of its Glory. (p. 71)

Clearly, the young people were roaming far from their rural Mennonite heritage. "Old Mennonites" had once resisted higher education preferring, as the Amish still do, to cut off formal education at the eighth grade. But, as the records of the literary society and my own interviews attest, Mennonite youth were primed for the Academy in the turn-of-the-century Progressive style. Furthermore, girls were headed toward the bastions of secularization just as surely as the boys. The female author of the literary society article was careful to point out that

> Some of our most brilliant debaters always disliked such subjects as,

> "Resolved: that the Farmer's Wife Works Harder than the Farmer himself," and "Resolved: that Woman has Contributed More to Civilization than Man," because the sexes were pitted against each other, and the gentlemen always lost.

She goes on to explain that later groups had to be advised by older church members because the participants in the societies were much younger than those of earlier groups. However, H. A Brunk (1972) speculates that the colony's conservative leader, Bishop Brunk, had to "answer questions about the literary activities of his churches." While Bishop Brunk "was inclined to justify them," he "stressed the need of proper regulations," and "was opposed to a society that would have amusement as its chief end." Thus, in order "to safeguard the church and promote the best interest of the young people," the society was "brought more directly under the supervision of the church" in 1918 and its name, "The Progressive Literary Society," was changed to the "Mennonite Literary Society." (Brunk, 1972:290) It appears, however, that such efforts to restrain the youth were increasingly ineffective.

Martha's explanation of how the community reacted to radio over the years seems to illustrate dwindling parental regulation of teenagers' growing worldliness long before the rebellious '60s. Interestingly, there were radios in the colony until the early 1930s when the "conservative element" in the Virginia Conference succeeded in passing a rule banning them. (B:7) Apparently, until then, people had viewed them in the same positive light in which they saw much of the new technology. Rather than fearing new-fangled things as steps on the road to worldliness, this particular colony seems to have embraced the promise of improved quality and efficiency: since the colony's establishment, farmers had sought the

expertise of agricultural scientists and county agricultural agents, dairymen had experimented with new equipment and methods for improving their product and its distribution, and the community as a whole had arranged for electrical wiring and purchased automobiles as soon as these conveniences were available.[33] In this spirit, perhaps, Martha's family did not come to view their radio as an evil thing, fit only for the trash heap. Instead, she remembers that, in the early '30s, after an earnest young minister visited the house to suggest to her parents that they could "do without" a radio, her parents just loaded the "old radio with the curves" in the car and took it to her grandparents in Maryland.

Given the less-than-zealous manner in which radios were banished from the colony, it is not surprising that, in little more than ten years, illicit radios had once again invaded the community. With her characteristic subtlety, Martha described how, by the mid-1940s, it was not unusual when visiting neighbors to hear the sound of radios coming from upstairs bedrooms. One's hosts would apologize for the distraction and simply assure the guests that the radio was not theirs but belonged to the teenaged children! (B:11)

My research suggests that several forces were at work in the relaxation of some of the community's safeguards against worldliness. First, as I have already indicated, the founders and first generations of colonists seem to have been strongly influenced by a turn-of-the-century American fascination with technological progress. They had more liberal attitudes about modernity even before their children and grandchildren came into greater contact with non-Mennonite culture. Second, there

appears to have been a family ethos among many Mennonites that generally encouraged indulgence of children's curiosity. Finally, even at the boundaries of parents' modern sensibilities and the limits of their patience with youthful experimentation, Mennonites have sometimes felt forced to expand choice for their youth simply in order to keep them in the fold. Such defensive actions continue to alter their communities and their culture in potentially profound ways.

Thus, throughout its history, the Newport News colony seems to have been set firmly on the path toward greater contact with its host society; young people may have led the way, but the way was paved by their predecessors. As we have seen, literaries kept Mennonite youth socializing with each other, minimizing their contacts with outsiders and giving them experience in managing group activities. However, they also provided the young people with an accepted avenue for exploration of issues their parents might have preferred they not discuss. Debaters gained critical thinking skills that might have interested them in pursuing higher education, another growing obsession of elite non-Mennonite society. Turn-of-the-century leaders recognized the need for Mennonite alternatives to secular colleges and universities. Protestant Bible schools were not acceptable alternatives because they posed a potential threat to the group's continued status as a sectarian alternative to Protestant denominationalism. Even when Mennonite schools had been established, it soon became necessary to provide conservative Mennonite alternatives (such as Eastern Mennonite College in Harrisonburg, Virginia) to counteract the dangerous liberalism alleged to thrive at schools such as Goshen College (Goshen, Indiana).[34]

Today, EMC would still be considered more conservative than some Mennonite schools but probably not in the sense envisioned by its organizers. Interestingly, because the first generation of Newport News colonists was instrumental in its founding, the college and the local Mennonite community are symbolically linked. Much as has happened in the local congregations, EMC has moved beyond the boundaries of its founders' imaginations.

**Community**

The reader will recall that, when Martha considered how her daughter formed a Mennonite identity, she first thought of the things that helped define her own identity: she and her Mennonite friends looked different from their classmates, they shared experiences different from the high school norm and they "felt different." Surely these things were important to the process of identifying with the Mennonite tradition and becoming tied to the community. But in her daughter's generation there were only subtle differences in dress and socializing was less segregated. How did they come to "feel" Mennonite? Martha suggests that they had an "accountability," not only to their parents but to the entire community. As in any small town, there was no escape from the gaze of one's neighbor. Beyond that, there were expectations concerning behavior and appearance that were nearly universal due to the interlocking relationships of Mennonites in work, play, and worship.

Kate and Martha spoke of the sense of accountability they developed when they were growing up: chaperons were unnecessary, for example, because young people were so completely aware of being responsible to the entire community for

their behavior. At the same time, they were aware of being lovingly accepted by their neighbors, young and old. Kate remembered, "I felt like, growing up, that everybody liked me and everybody was proud of me and everybody was my friend. It was a very affirming feeling growing up . . . I always felt very much affirmed and appreciated by the community and the church . . . " (C:21) This reciprocal support and respect inspires her to give as much as she can back to the generation that helped raise her: "There's another aspect of the community. [It] is not so much coming back to get strokes or to feel good but I have a certain feeling of responsibility coming back too . . . You don't just come back to get something to make *you* feel good and get nurture or whatever but to feel like you have something to give back . . . " (C:21) In fact, it is in large part her commitment to the cycle of life and the loving relationships of her home community that keeps Kate in the Mennonite faith: "I don't really go around picking a church, going down a list of every little bity belief and say, yes, okay 99%, I'll go here. It's more the feeling of community . . ." (C:26) Of course, when Kate speaks of community, she is referring to people who have been committed to each other for many years.

As the pastor of Huntington Mennonite Church put it, the Mennonites have understood themselves to be a "community of faith." (E:9) Realizing that they can no longer draw upon weekday relationships to support this community of faith to the extent they have in the past, local Mennonites have searched for increased opportunities for "fellowship" within the church and, for the most part, on Sunday morning. Like many Protestant denominations, they have incorporated "sharing" time

into the regular church service so that members can stand and express prayer needs (things for which the congregation is asked to pray), their thankfulness to God, even their thoughts on the Scripture. Outside the Sunday morning service, there are fellowship suppers (also customary in most Protestant denominations) and small group fellowship or Bible study. Certainly, these are all occasions for members to share their lives with each other. Still, Mennonites have to struggle to maintain the closeness they could almost take for granted when they lived and worked together throughout the week. These "other ways of promoting and retaining that sense of community," mentioned by the pastor constantly strain against the competing demands of modern living. It is unclear whether local Mennonites have successfully preserved the best of both worlds.

When Kate considered how things have changed since the days of authoritarian leaders who sought to hold the Mennonite World together with religious "ordinances" and behavioral restrictions, she expressed the current attitude as, "It's more: do your own thing but be a community; care for each other and support each other but allow for differences and be tolerant." (C:19) This attitude seems very much in tune with the liberal sentiments of mainstream America's educated elite. Certainly, the college-educated, "ethnic" or "born and bred Mennonite" informants with whom I spoke were very much influenced by that particular culture. Nevertheless, given the close-knit community in which they were socialized, the phrase, "Do your own thing but be a community," would mean something different to these Mennonites than it would to most other Americans.

**Linking Choice and Commitment**

Since one of the defining characteristics of the free church movement has been the emphasis on adult free decision, a paradox has been built into the Mennonite experience. Choice must be maintained in order to ensure true commitment. A member's commitment is ultimately to God, not to the group. Yet the group is supposed to be devoted to carrying out the will of God, committing members to the task of ensuring that the group correctly discerns God's will. The result is debate and the endless process of trying to achieve consensus. Historically, schism and splinter groups have resulted when consensus could not be realized.

As we have seen, debate and compromise occurred within and between the generations, in families as well as in the congregation and community at large. Realizing, perhaps, that open confrontations were largely ineffective, Kate's mother tried to hold back the march of time and teenage fashion by letting down hems on the sly. Still, Kate suspects that her younger sisters overcame this obstacle by rolling up their skirts at the waist when they got to school, much as she herself failed to put the prayer covering on again after taking it off for physical education. Radios rode in on the coattails of more practical inventions such as trucks, telephones and tractors; when they were recognized by the church as a threat to faith, community members obediently stashed them away--only to bring them out again when the controversy died down.

Youthful experimentation had to be tolerated within reason in order to avoid

driving away the group's greatest hope for its future. Institutions created to keep Mennonite youth securely within the fold have helped them form Mennonite identities but, as is wont to happen with children, new interpretations transformed parents' intended programs into ones a new generation could embrace. Younger generations entered into leadership inspired to work for a quality of fellowship which was somewhat different but still recognizable to their parents. In the past twenty years, this fellowship has attracted new membership, a cause for celebration as well as serious self-appraisal within the church. Newcomers bring many gifts to the group but they also bring expectations that may be contradictory to the Mennonite mission as it has been understood in the past.

As we shall see more clearly in Chapter Five, new members are more likely to concern themselves with issues such as doctrinal flexibility and the "sense of community" that comes from church-going rather than a pervasive identity derived from a separate and disciplined way of life. Newcomers therefore present the representatives of traditional ways with challenges to define and, perhaps, redefine what it means to be Mennonite. In another generation or two, perhaps members of the families who entered the Mennonite network in the late twentieth century will be the leaders of a debate on the subject of Mennonite peoplehood. They will have to deal more fully with the consequences of today's growing diversity. It will no longer be possible to easily identify Mennonites by their surnames for, along with the Yoders, Schenks, and Hertzlers, there will be plenty of Smiths, Joneses, and Browns--not to mention Garcias and Wangs.

# CHAPTER V

## COMPETING VISIONS OF THE MENNONITE FUTURE

The stories of Martha and Kate evoke idyllic images of a close-knit, nurturing community united by a common faith. The primary impression they create is that the group's harmony is maintained not by rigid doctrine and zealous enforcement of norms but by voluntary commitment to a common set of core values. Their memories of growing up and raising their children in the Newport News colony suggest that the expectations of family and neighbors were keenly felt but that loyalty to ideals was stressed over obedience to individuals; rather than seeing them as inherited restraints, Martha and Kate experienced their ties to other Mennonites as opportunities to learn how to live with the commitment they chose when they became baptized members of the church. With powerful, persistent subtlety, positive attitudes toward choice and commitment were linked in daily interaction with community members, young and old.

It is not a perfect picture. Both women allude to instances in which the closeness of the community was either insufficient to protect its members from outside forces or was itself the source of frustration. Still, they describe an environment which, however imperfect, embraces qualities longed for by so many mainstream Americans. These qualities have attracted to Mennonite churches worshipers from a variety of religious and cultural backgrounds. The newcomers, especially in urban areas like Newport News, are drawn to the "sense of community"

they experience in congregations where family networks many generations old once anchored church members to a secure base. Today these congregations are organizationally more like garden variety Protestant denominations than homogeneous sectarian enclaves. Still, the Mennonites retain the *heritage* of a sect and the collective *memories* of small, isolated communities. In the course of this project, I explored the question many Mennonites have asked in recent years: can newcomers and old members alike continue to enjoy this sense of community outside of the structures of belief and practice constructed and maintained by Mennonites for generations? How much tinkering can the Mennonite sacred canopy withstand before it loses its protective, ordering qualities?

I have already commented on some church-wide, academically-sponsored efforts to address this question on the national and international level. Changing Anabaptist historiography and the growing interest in Mennonite identity can be seen as part of an intellectual elite's effort to reconstruct "Mennonite" and justify the group's continued existence as *a* people. Martha and Kate indicated that locals have an interest in the reconstruction debate and a special perspective on the issues of identity and community. From these "natives" of the Newport News colony, I learned about the substantial new membership in the Warwick district as well as the controversy over admitting military personnel into membership. By speaking to a new member (Jackie) and to church participants who serve in the military (Jim and Dawn), I gained new perspectives on the issues of identity and community.

**Identity: Why Mennonite?**

As members of the military, Jim and Dawn have a unique perspective on the issue of Mennonite identity. Their presence in the church brings into sharper relief Mennonite pacifism, one of the beliefs that has traditionally served to mark the boundaries of the group and to define its identity. Given the fact that their professions are unacceptable to the group as a whole, I wondered what brought Jim and Dawn to Huntington Mennonite Church. Interestingly, geography was the most influential factor: they live in the neighborhood that grew up around the church. Another, although less pivotal motivation, was the fact that Jim's father had grown up Mennonite, so Jim had a Mennonite influence in his life even though he was not raised in the church. Even before joining the military, Jim "church-hopped" with his mother, attending Catholic, Episcopalian, and Quaker services until he settled down for a while in a Methodist church. Dawn grew up in a large, non-denominational "community church." (F:10) As a result of their pluralistic upbringings and their adult experiences moving from church to church as they were transferred to new duty posts, both Dawn and Jim developed an appreciation for what they call an "ecumenical" approach to Christianity; as such, they reject traditional denominational boundaries and seek a more inclusive church, one which is unified in rigorous study of the Bible. As we shall see, Jim and Dawn believe Christians should identify with the Bible and not a particular church tradition. Still, Dawn points out that "churches all have personalities." Furthermore, she suggests that people should choose

churches that fit their *own* personalities:

> Are they highly charismatic, are they highly emotional? Well, they're going to pick a church that meets those needs. If you're highly intellectual and you like the serious stuff, you're going to find a church that sticks strait to the Bible and the serious side. If you like a lot of ritual and pomp, you're going to find a church that has that because . . . that's what you like, that's what you expect and that's what you need . . . So each church has a personality, each denomination has a personality. And I don't think there's anything wrong in that as long as the Gospel portion stays intact. You can't mess with that. Those are untouchable parts. But whether the pulpit's on the side or in the middle? Come on. (F:10)

Given the view that people have different needs and tend to seek out places of worship that meet those needs, Dawn and Jim believe Mennonites have a legitimate role as advocates of pacifism. This explanation helps to form the basis for the couple's tolerance of their differences with the church; this, in large part, is what makes it possible for them to attend. "We think that the conscience of the country probably needs a church like the Mennonites or a group like the Mennonites who believe in peace," Jim told me. "It's just that . . . we don't interpret the peace issue the same way they do." (F:7) They have enjoyed the fellowship of the church and have been made to feel welcome there; they developed a mostly unspoken "understanding" with the church members that the different "interpretations" on the subject of peace would be tolerated; the issue might be discussed but not "pushed" on them and it was expected that they, in turn, would not openly advocate the military position. (F:6) Of course, as an extreme minority in the church (there is only one other couple as closely associated with the military) Jim and Dawn never expected to enter into a full debate on whether peace can best be achieved through

pacifism or by providing a strong military deterrent. Becoming members of the church was never an issue, mostly because they never imagined they would stay in Newport News so long. Expecting to be transferred within two to three years, they were better able to deal with the inherent tension of their situation: "No harm done," they thought. "We'll be in and out. Good experience." (F:8)

Then came the Gulf War. Tension that had been mostly hidden, bubbled to the surface more and more often. There were no hurtful scenes in which Jim and Dawn were put on the spot in front of the whole congregation, but the "peace issue was hammered pretty heavily," and "it became old." (F:9-10) The war clearly made it more difficult for the couple to *feel* the tolerance toward Mennonite pacifism they believed they should observe. Their first response to my questions about how they were received in the church was very positive. "Most people were supportive of us," Dawn told me. People in the church would say things like, "'Hey, we're talking about this but we don't want you to take it personal, we don't want to drive you away.'" Some even suggested that they believed Dawn and Jim were providing needed services as members of the military: "We had a lot of Mennonites approach us and say, 'We appreciate you. Somebody has to do it.' . . . [although] they didn't feel called to, they recognized and respected those that felt they had been called to . . ." (F:8) "So far," Jim assured me, the church has not "used peace as a divider between us . . . we haven't had any problems." (F:10) Nevertheless, they were fully aware that many of their fellow church-goers simply assumed that the Mennonite peace witness might eventually persuade them to see the error in their perspective

on the issue: "So they just wait for us to mature to be kindred with them. Can't argue," admitted Dawn, "maybe that's true. We'll wait and see . . . but . . . at this time, I would disagree with that." (F:8)

So far, by adopting a live-and-let-live attitude, the couple has been able to reconcile intellectually these conflicting peace beliefs. Their other comments indicate, however, that the inescapable difficulty of this process may be wearing on them. As close as they feel to their fellow worshipers, it is difficult to feel fully a part of the Mennonite faith family. Their differing constructions of Christianity have formed a barrier; in this case, it is unlikely that the symbol of identity can help the couple and the church negotiate the boundary drawn by the peace issue for it is precisely the notions of Mennonite identity and peoplehood that Jim and Dawn reject--at least, for themselves:

> When [people] say they are Southern Baptist or Lutheran, Quaker, Mennonite, it's not just church, it is a way of living, it's a history. And that's what they want to maintain . . . I think in any evangelical and any outreach program, that has to fall by the wayside. Um, because if that becomes more important than reaching those around you, then I think your priorities are wrong. And I think that's a battle of many older churches. We've *always* done it this way . . . I think in scripture they call that a luke warm church. It's not going anywhere. It's content. (F:11)

Dawn said she did not think Huntington had become luke warm but indicated that, even in this progressive congregation where there are as many new members and attenders as there are "born and bred" Mennonites, "There's always that battle, that tendency to mix its history, its traditions and its cultures in the church." "The real goal," she asserted, "is to go out and fish for men." (F:11) Clearly, she and her

husband feel that spreading the Gospel is more than just one Christian duty among many; to them, it is perhaps the greatest calling of all.

Dawn and Jim feel that, because Mennonite churches have been family-based historically, the tradition's survival has not been dependent upon Mennonites' willingness to be "fishers of men," the phrase Jesus reportedly used to describe his disciples' role (Matthew 4.19). As this couple sees it, the notion of Mennonite peoplehood has contributed to a complacency that has compromised the evangelical imperative. While Dawn acknowledged that the Mennonites have had their own "philosophy" concerning the spreading of the Gospel (they "witness by their lifestyle"), Jim stressed that this was "passive evangelism." He and his wife seem to prefer methods they feel the Mennonites would find too "pushy" (for example, "going door to door" and "going to a mall [to] pass out tracts"). (F:17) They could understand why Mennonites might not want to risk losing "that family atmosphere where everybody knows everyone," by actively recruiting new members. Still, they could not condone the sacrifice of evangelism to, as I put it to them, "the benefits of a small, cohesive group" or a sense of "belonging." (F:22) Dawn told me, "I think there's a lot of complacency . . . self-contentment: 'I have my friends, I have my family, I have my church. What more is there?' . . . There's no willingness to maybe compromise that," she sighed. "You bring in too many people, that's a threat." (F:23) The danger, Jim suggested, is that this complacency can also lead to the "tendency not to really spend time digging deep into God's Word." (F:26) Thus, while the Mennonites make "wonderful points" about "lifestyle," Dawn and Jim feel that too often a Biblical

basis is simply assumed and no scriptural reference is given as evidence. (F:26)

The primacy of the Bible and the dangers of a separate identity were recurring themes in my conversations with Jim and Dawn. "You know," Jim reiterated, "when [people] say, "I'm a Quaker," or "I'm a Presbyterian," or a Mennonite, or a Methodist, they're identifying with a tradition, a man, versus God's calling." (F:22) He admits that the church in many areas has been able to "kind of shake off a lot of traditions like a worn coat." Perhaps he was thinking of his native Pennsylvania when he added, "But you still have the very conservative Mennonite church which will not change." (F:22) Jim tried to end our discussion of their experience in the church on a positive note, telling me:

> I think the church as a whole is doing very well . . . They are growing. They're starting to kick off some of the legalistic views and they're starting to realize that they're growing out and they need to attract other people to the church. I think they're doing it very slowly . . . which is kind of wise . . . I think they will succeed in the end. (F:28)

But, once again his appreciation of the church's progress was tempered by personal disappointment: "I just wish," he said, letting out a long breath before going on, "that, um, they weren't so hooked on pacifism!" (F:28) He chuckled, but his wistfulness made a clear impression on me.

As I read over the transcripts of Dawn and Jim's interviews, I was struck by one of Jim's statements that seemed to summarize their positions so well: "Drop the phrase, 'I'm a Mennonite,' and start using the phrase, 'I'm a Christian.'" (F:21) While his wife seems to think that a separate Mennonite identity can have a limited usefulness, they appear to agree that, ultimately, it is a phase the group needs to

grow out of. The emphasis on the Bible over notions of identity and peoplehood makes good sense for people who, like Jim and Dawn, remain in one geographical area for only a few years at a time. When they move into a new town or city, they seek a church where they can "have fellowship," study the Bible, "learn" and, "grow." (F:10, 12-13) To them, one of Huntington's greatest attractions is the diversity of opinion within the church; rather than being a source of strife, they see it as providing for good Bible study: "You never know what's going to come out for sure . . . There is a willingness . . . to talk, not to withhold things." (F:13) Their view appears to be that the process of debate is an end in itself, rather than simply a means to achieve consensus. But good Bible study represents more than just an intellectual challenge. "We, as members of the church, are commanded by the Lord to test what's been told to us, to make sure it's scriptural," explained Jim. "*Anyone* can make a mistake. There is no such thing as a person being better than all the rest . . . Our job . . . is to make sure that the leader is also within God's word." (F:4)

In addition to the "testing, listening and discussion" encouraged at Huntington, the couple appreciates the fact that "most of the decision-making authority" is kept at "the district or the congregational level." (F:4, 17) They recognize that they probably would not have been welcomed as warmly elsewhere and that the Warwick District's freedom from the dictates of the Virginia Conference helped make it possible for them to participate so fully in the church. Given the unique familiarity of Newport News Mennonites with military installations and supporting industries, there was greater willingness among them to interact with people actively involved

in national defense than there would have been elsewhere in the Conference. The fact that these congregations actually debated whether or not to accept active military personnel into membership is testimony to the changing attitudes within the church. Huntington, which was founded in the '20s as a Mission of the Warwick River Church and became a congregation in 1951, early turned to the use of tract evangelism in order to bring the Mennonite message to area servicemen. The purpose of the 1950s outreach was to convince the men to resign; becoming a member of the church was clearly out of the question until they had left the military. Interestingly, then, there *was* a time when Mennonites were willing to pass out tracts. In those days, this more aggressive outreach was somewhat successful; a history of the congregation notes: "Several boys became convinced that military service was wrong for them, and were granted the status of conscientious objector." (Yoder, 1972)

It seems that after the leaders of more aggressive evangelistic efforts had moved on, few were interested in continuing them. Apparently, establishing and nurturing a new church in a new, non-Mennonite neighborhood was seen as the perhaps the greatest means of outreach. Church "planting" provides opportunities for Mennonites to "witness by their lifestyle," just as Dawn pointed out. It also provides a base for an active "social ministry" that can serve the corporal as well as the spiritual needs of community members. While some might look to these congregations--and other churches with similar social concerns--for service opportunities, identity is still a clumsy concept for many people. Some people, like Jim and Dawn, find that the notions of identity and peoplehood carry negative

associations such as exclusivity and isolation.

I think it is unlikely that many newcomers attend Mennonite churches in order to *identify* with a new way of life. Mennonites who stress the Anabaptist Vision are trying in part to demonstrate to *long-time members as well as potential ones* that Mennonite peoplehood is defined by the commitment to follow Jesus, not by cultural or ethnic factors. To be Mennonite, according to this view, requires a commitment to strive toward new personhood--not to be Swiss/German, Dutch/Russian, liberal or conservative, but to be a radical witness to Jesus' message. Historically, the Mennonites have been one amidst a handful of groups who emphasize the Gospel's call for peace and brotherhood, in addition to the salvation promised to believers. I wonder whether this challenge to identify with a radical heritage is fully understood by those who look to the Mennonites for refuge from mainstream America (and other modern, industrialized societies); can this be easily grasped by those (and I count myself among them) who have been socialized to be consumers of feelings and religious "experiences," as well as automobiles and microwave ovens? This is the question asked by Robert Bellah, et al. in Habits of the Heart (1985), their study of Americans' understanding of ideas such as community, commitment and public service. These authors contend that our culture deprives us of the language to understand and communicate our need for these wider human relationships. The language of independence, so integral to the establishment of our democratic experiment, has mutated into individualistic attitudes that, ironically, imprison modern Americans in the Self.

This thought-provoking argument would resonate in most Mennonite churches; many Mennonites see themselves as resisting precisely these individualistic attitudes. But my impression is that newcomers tend to arrive in urban Mennonite congregations with many of the same expectations that they might bring to churches affiliated with almost any Protestant denomination--expectations grounded in our pervasive culture of individualism. The words of one new member, Jackie, seem instructive. I asked her what pleased her the most about the Mennonite church she attends. Without hesitation she answered: "Sense of community. Support and, basically, they accept you for where you're at." She smiled. "Maybe it isn't strict enough today, for peoples' feelings but, for me, they're open, forgiving and loving enough that that's where I would feel comfortable." (D:2) Throughout the interview, I easily sensed her genuine contentment and gratitude toward the group, especially the pastor whose friendship and guidance helped convince her that she could be a Mennonite. "I'm not a doctrine type person," she told me. "It was just the sense of community and down-to-earthness, and people," that convinced her that she had found the right church (D:4).

I did not speak to Jackie long enough to learn a great deal about her philosophy of religion; I cannot claim that I "know" everything she wants out of her experience with a church. In the course of one hour, however, several impressions floated to the surface of her consciousness and, over the months since we spoke, these impressions have taken on new meaning for me. Perhaps the fairest statement I can make is that Jackie's comments got me to think more carefully about what new

Mennonites hope to find in the church, what they appreciate about their experiences so far. I was struck by the notion that the "sense of community" which Jackie appreciates so much is rooted in a set of relationships that were formed in the context of a Mennonite colony. The colony was *both* a place and state of mind. Can the idea of community survive indefinitely outside the structure of networks and institutions that confirm the reality of community in people's hearts and minds? I wonder. Can the institution of the local congregation support this reality in isolation from the other types of relationships that used to draw Newport News Mennonites together under a sheltering canopy? The world of interlocking commitments in work, play, home and church is slowly fading; perhaps, as long as the collective memories of this world are shared, the attractive "sense" of community will survive.

# CHAPTER VI

# CONCLUSION

"Community" can refer to many things, both physical and figurative. I found that, in a group that once had unmistakable physical and doctrinal boundaries, "community" has become primarily a state of mind. In the past, group boundaries (whether they were considered embracing or confining) were certainly clear to both insiders and outsiders. With the loss of clear boundaries, the group's collective identity has been called into question. In struggling to redefine Mennonite identity, many new and ethnic church members are debating the need for a unique vision. Is it more important to survive as a distinct group or to support Christian ecumenism? Are Mennonite churches becoming Protestant denominations different in style rather than substance, or will Mennonites retain their status as a sect devoted to a vision of primitive, apostolic Christianity?

As geographically defined communities can no longer be counted upon to enforce doctrinal boundaries, Mennonites have drawn upon other structures and symbols to maintain their peoplehood. While the local institutions of church and family remain vital, the regional conferences, service organizations, colleges, and publishing houses have drawn Mennonites into ever expanding networks of both face-to-face relations and impersonal communication mediated by the written word. In the process, the Mennonite symbolic universe has been broadened and elaborated by new constructions built with old symbols. As Cohen (1985) would predict, the

group's most potent symbols have proven to be the most ambiguous. The Anabaptist/Mennonite identity has been debated for centuries. Precisely because so many different people with different ideas claim to know what *the* Mennonite identity is, it has successfully legitimated Mennonite institutions and structured individual identities. Community is closely linked to identity in the Mennonite symbolic universe and it is even more vague a term. The word "community" is such a universal symbol that newcomers to the church readily respond to it without grasping the complex of meanings it can have for Mennonites. Some of these meanings may, in fact, be lost as Mennonites participate ever more fully in the modern, mobile, individualistic world that others take for granted.

In seeking the ideal of community, the confirmation of self found in *belonging* to others rather than escaping commitment to them, one exchanges the isolation of self-absorption for the boundaries of group membership. This is not to say that identification with a group is therefore inherently harmful; still, it must be remembered that "we" cannot exist without an opposing "they" (Barth 1969; Cohen 1985); the more intense the feeling of membership, the greater the distance from the non-members. If this situation is inevitable, how can its effects be controlled? How can the fulfilling experience of membership, a state of full participation in a group with a common viewpoint and set of goals, be reconciled with the values of tolerance and inclusivity? As I "learned to know" the Mennonites, I was struck by this, perhaps the most basic dynamic of social organization: the paradox of boundary maintenance that forces a group to shut out potential members even as it beckons them to enter.

Because of this paradox, Mennonites have attempted to rewrite the rules of boundary maintenance. In the present day context of diversity, tolerance, and individual preference, many within the Mennonite world are no longer comfortable with impenetrable boundaries such as those found in Kauffman's Manual of Bible Doctrines (1898) and still expressed in the austerity of Old Order communities. Drawing upon their tradition of congregational decision-making, Mennonite churches have sought to define their positions on an on-going, case-by-case basis. This type of communal definition process necessarily results in hazy boundaries. As almost every other point of doctrine and identity becomes vulnerable to this process of questioning and accommodation, non-resistance has continued to withstand the pressure. The peace position may waver, as it did briefly in Newport News, but it seems unlikely that Mennonites will allow it to collapse. As one of the defining images of the Anabaptist Vision, a major pole in the Mennonite sacred canopy, non-resistance must remain essentially non-negotiable in order for Mennonites to survive as a group.

With respect to some of the other issues--modesty, simplicity, and service, for example--the group seems to allow individuals to "police" themselves. Newcomers and skeptical "ethnic" Mennonites can examine their own meanings, compare them to the statements of belief produced by congregations and larger Mennonite institutions, then decide for themselves whether they can identity with the Mennonite Mission. They can remain as long as they feel comfortable; no one will ask them to leave (although, there is no guarantee that the tension of prolonged discontinuity will

not strain the otherwise friendly relationship). It is unclear whether this approach allows Mennonites to continue practicing community in the sense that they have traditionally understood it. Still, many have been added to the "faith family" through this willingness to debate the "nonessentials" and the patience with which Mennonites wait for their "witness" to convince the unconvinced.

Will these hazy boundaries they have retained help Mennonites live in harmony with their own group, even as they try to live in greater harmony with mainstream American society? Group members constantly debate this. Some question whether harmony should be Mennonites' only concern. They point out that the Anabaptist Vision is necessarily dissonant with the way of the World; just as the tension of dissonance has a pivotal role in music, preparing the way for resolution, the Mennonite "witness" should remain a divergent theme that forces members of the larger society to reexamine their assumptions. Perhaps, as the musical metaphor suggests, the group can live in mutual tolerance while continuing to challenge the status quo; in fact, it may be argued that Mennonites *must* maintain the dissonance as well as strive for harmony in order to survive.

The Newport News colony and the larger Mennonite World to which it belongs are microcosms of human society and culture. As such they provide valuable opportunities to study relationships and social meanings on a smaller scale. What is learned from the study of such communities could have wider applications. I believe the Mennonite experience offers some valuable lessons to the larger society in which it is located. Faced with the challenges of diversity as well as a longing for

community, Americans might look to groups like this for models of reconciliation. Members of this community are keenly aware that they do not express themselves with one voice. Few expect to harmonize completely their many divergent ways. In the concepts of community and identity, however, they gain access to shared symbols that have helped and will continue to help them resolve the dissonance, to turn discord into reunion.

## ENDNOTES

1. The Warwick River Mennonite Church is the original congregation. The Providence Amish Mennonite Church was formed by members of the colony in 1900. The Huntington congregation began as an urban mission of the Warwick River Church in the 1920s. In 1970s, the Williamsburg Mennonite Church was planted in Norge. I have concentrated my project on Warwick and Huntington.

2. The colony was established on what had been a 1200 acre plantation. The land was purchased from the family that had owned it since 1810. Two settlers purchased the total acreage and resold it as plots ranging in size from 7 to 166 acres. Families started arriving within a few months and most of the land was resold within ten years. One of the authors of the colony's 50-year anniversary history book gives us a good indication of what a bargain the Peninsula land was for the Mennonite farmers coming from the North and Midwest. The author's father purchased *his* father's Ohio farm in 1887 for $125 per acre. Eight years later, in the midst of the 1893-97 economic depression, he sold it for $60 per acre. In May 1897, he and his fellow investor paid $10 per acre for the future colony in Tidewater Virginia. While the soil was overworked, it was not exhausted and was said to "yield very kindly and promptly to manure and good treatment." (Warwick River Mennonite Church, 1947:6-10)

3. As we will see in Chapters 3 and 4, the Newport News colony was never as isolated from the modern world as some of the ultra conservative Amish and Old Order Mennonite groups that have furnished the popular imagination with its most vivid images of separation and humility. Nevertheless, the group's lifestyle was still somewhat anachronistic in the early twentieth century. The situation did not change overnight; their growing modernism was not fully apparent until they turned from farming to real estate and the trades in the 1950s.

4. I have assigned all the interview participants (informants) fictitious names.

5. It is common within this community and in the larger Mennonite world to distinguish between new members and "ethnic" Mennonites who have the German or Dutch background associated with the group's sixteenth-century European roots. Another term used for Mennonites whose families have been part of the "faith family" for more than one generation is "born and bred Mennonite." For more on Mennonites' ethnic history and the problems associated with the "ethnic" designation, see Chapters Three and Five.

6. Ritzer has entertained hopes that his schema might represent a new paradigm in the social sciences in the sense described by Kuhn (1962). In the efforts during the 1980s to avoid polarized explanations of social reality (i.e., the search for a "micro-macro link"), Ritzer perceived a demand for an approach that integrates what he identifies

as the three major traditions in sociology: 1) the "social facts" paradigm associated with Durkheim, 2) the "social definition" paradigm associated with Weber, and 3) the "social behavior" paradigm developed out of the work of psychologist B. F. Skinner.

7. For the most part, Ritzer's continua are sufficiently open-ended to discourage any tendency to assign theories or concepts to an extreme category. Thus, even though the individual level of analysis can be located at the extreme microscopic end, macroscopic phenomena range almost indefinitely in the other direction. Most importantly, the objective/subjective dimension is truly a continuum for there are potentially infinite gradations of objectivity and subjectivity and it is very unlikely that pure cases of either quality can be found. Furthermore, just as we would not expect to identify phenomena that fall neatly on the objective or subjective ends, neither can we hope to place social processes or theories on the continuum in precise spatial relationship to each other. Thus, even though the continua form a graph, Ritzer did not set out to actually plot points on it. Rather, I believe this graphic representation functions as a reminder of the some of the complexity underlying the terms "agency" and "structure."

   The social scientific concern with agency versus structure is not necessarily the same as the philosophical problem of free will versus determinism. It is possible to believe in free will but choose to study the structural limitations placed on individual action. Furthermore, those limitations may be macroscopic (i.e., organizational rules, societal norms) or microscopic (i.e., individuals' physical and psychological habits and needs, language and conversation patterns). Ritzer's levels of social reality (see Figure 2) therefore refer primarily to the *focus* of study rather than a researcher's philosophical assumptions. For the most part, those who theorize about macro-objective phenomena do not assume that individuals are entirely passive in the face of such phenomena. Neither do micro-oriented theorists assume that macro phenomena exist only in the minds of individuals. Most theorists would agree that social reality consists of agents and structures in some degree of interaction, whether or not they as researchers actually choose to study that interaction.

8. Berger and Luckman hoped to reinterpret the Sociology of Knowledge, using some of the assumptions of both Social Psychology and more structure-oriented sociological formulations, such as that of the Structural Functionalist school. They set out to focus the discipline on "whatever passes for 'knowledge' in a society," rather than limiting it to the traditional study of privileged knowledge such as theory or ideology. (1966, p. 3)

9. In synthesizing and reinterpreting the work of many preceding theorists such as Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, George Herbert Mead and Alfred Schutz, Berger and Luckman articulate a useful new interpretive framework. For example, Berger and Luckman borrow several concepts from the Symbolic Interactionist perspective developed out the work of Mead (especially his Mind, Self and Society),

but widen their focus to deal more effectively with both small-scale mental phenomena and large-scale societal ones. The Social Construction of Reality is usually is referred to by sociologists as a social psychological work, a reformulation of the sociology of knowledge, and/or part of the phenomenological tradition in philosophy which was shaped by Edmund Husserl and reinterpreted by Schutz, Berger's professor at New York's New School for Social Research.

10. Here Berger and Luckman take their cue from the twin imperatives of Durkheim ("Consider social facts as things") and Weber ("Both for sociology . . . and for history, the object of cognition is the subjective meaning-complex of action.") A growing number of theorists are finding the work of these two masters to be complementary. Berger and Luckman were early supporters of this increasingly popular opinion; furthermore, they assert that neither Durkheim nor Weber assumed their theories were contradictory. (1966, p. 18; Durkheim, 1950, p. 14; Weber, 1947, p. 101).

11. Ritzer uses the objective/subjective dimension to indicate what is and is not available to the researcher's observation while Berger and Luckman are concerned with the individual's perception of reality. Whereas Ritzer would picture culture and values in the macro-subjective level of social reality (because they, apart from their material and behavioral products, belong to the world of ideas), Berger and Luckman would view these things (which they would consider part of the "symbolic universe") as part of what makes society an objective reality.

12. Order as a psychological imperative is distinguishable from order in the moral sense. I refer here only to the tendency of the human mind to perceive differences, group same or similar entities, and to integrate new information into existing classificatory schemes.

13. I think the symbolic universe concept is a useful alternative to the word "culture". The term is sufficiently broad to recall to readers the pervasive, abstract nature of culture which is only partially represented by any one manifestation of it (i.e., artifacts, language, myths).

14. These descriptions of the Anabaptists were quoted by Harold Bender (1944). His scholarship is considered emblematic of a new interest in Anabaptist heritage and its uses for the Mennonite church of his day. The title of this article, "The Anabaptist Vision," has become the label for the celebration of Anabaptism as a single, coherent tradition.

15. The surviving radicals of the Reformation and their spiritual heirs formed many groups that, although they are divided by geography and some doctrinal issues, share the belief in the separation of church and state. Melton (1987) identifies the surviving adherents of this tradition as belonging to the European Free Church family. He classifies the Quakers as English members of this "family," while, on the

German side, there are the Mennonites and Hutterites, groups that trace their origins to the followers of early Anabaptist leaders Menno Simmons (a former priest) and Jacob Hutter. Jakob Ammann and his followers began the Amish tradition when they broke away from the Mennonites (1690s). The differences leading to schism, in part, were over the Amish determination to use the "ban" or shunning to discipline group members and their rejection of the notion that Anabaptist sympathizers, who assisted the group but remained unconverted, might still be saved (Hostetler, 1968;28).

16. I must stress that this is my own interpretation of The Sacred Canopy; I realize that I may have been influenced by the later writings of Berger as well as those of other authors, particularly, Robert Bellah (see Chapter Five, page 78).

17. "Old Mennonites," the alternate name for the largest group in the Mennonite family, should not be confused with the "Old Order Mennonites." This term refers to several groups that split from Mennonite congregations in America, for many of the same reasons the Amish broke away from the Mennonites while still in Europe; see note 2, page 21.

18. One of the informants provided an exception. Her maternal grandparents moved back East, after homesteading in Missouri, to settle in this colony. She believes that they were the only Mennonite family that stayed long enough to stake a claim in Missouri and that, feeling isolated, they sought a viable Mennonite community (which also had the advantage of cheap land).

19. Unlike their Anabaptist cousins, the Hutterites, Mennonites and Amish have not been known to hold property in common; rather, they developed a tradition of private ownership and mutual aid.

20. One member of the community wrote, "A number of homes were opened to army officers and their wives. We believe that in many instances there was an effective testimony left by our people in this way . . . It remains to be seen whether we have learned lessons which will enable us to make our community stronger in faith and more powerful in witness to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Warwick River Mennonite Church, 1947: 121, 122)

21. In American Mennonites and Protestant Movements: A Community Paradigm (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1987), Beulah Stauffer Hostetler describes Fundamentalism as being the product of "three broad streams of conservative thought." The first of these was the influential, though controversial, Princeton Theology, which sought to demonstrate the absolute inerrancy of the Bible through "proofs". Another influence was the Bible or Prophecy Conference Movement of the 1870s with its emphasis on the literal interpretation of apocalyptic passages in the Bible. Finally, the place of emotion in conservative Christianity was reasserted with the success of mass evangelistic meetings. This approach was made famous by Dwight L. Moody, whom

Hostetler calls the "preeminent evangelist of the Third Great Awakening." (pp. 202-204)

22. Martha tended to refer to a "conservative element" which had come into the community before her birth but was still influential when she was growing up (B:7, 9, 11). More specifically, she said:

> . . . There was a very staunch conservative bishop, George Brunk the first, here. He was a very authoritarian man. He knew what was going on. I think he helped build a strong community. The discussion is still going on: how would things have differed if that strong personality had not been here? He arrived about a decade after the colony began. (C:9)

Kate was born several years after his death but heard his name invoked by her "authoritarian" grandmother when she and her siblings tested the limits of their family and community ("I can just still remember my grandmother saying, 'If George R. Brunk were alive, this would not be tolerated!'" [B:5]). She too recognized his role in "preserving community." Both she and Martha were careful to emphasize the positive contributions of this "strong leader" but neither seemed to think the authoritarian approach appropriate for the community today.

23. Today there are seven military installations on the Peninsula: Fort Eustis, Fort Monroe, Langley Air Force Base, the Naval Weapons Station, Cheatham Annex, Camp Perry, and the Coast Guard Reserve Training Center.

24. For example, Martha spoke of several friends who have non-Mennonite backgrounds (Baptist, Episcopalian and Greek Orthodox Catholic) and have joined her congregation.

25. While most "Old Mennonites" were still speaking German earlier this century--in their churches, if not elsewhere--Warwick District Mennonites did not. This is further evidence that the colony was made up of relatively "Americanized" Mennonites from its inception. I noticed during my interviews, however, that some traces of German have survived. All of the ethnic or "born and bred" Mennonites I met spoke of "learning to know" things or people, rather than "getting to know" them. In fact, this is a direct translation of the German term "kennen lernen."

26. Kauffman's Manual of Bible Doctrines was one of the efforts of the institutionalizing Mennonite Church (Old Mennonites) to codify doctrine. Much of the form and some of the content was borrowed from late nineteenth-century American evangelicalism; according to historian James Juhnke (1989), the Manual reflected "a broader shift away from tradition and nonverbal ritual as transmitters of values in community and toward more precise and written teachings and rules." (pp. 114-115)

Kauffman's explanation of Mennonite doctrine was divided into a "Plan of Salvation," discussion of the seven "Ordinances" (baptism, communion, the foot-washing rite, the prayer-head-covering for women, the holy kiss, anointing with oil, and marriage--these functioned as "symbols or memorials" rather than sacraments), and "Restrictions" designed to keep Christians from going astray (these included "'non conformity to the World, that is, refusal of worldly adornment, politics, amusements, drunkenness, etc.;'" non-resistance; rejection of sworn oaths, avoidance of lawsuits; and nonmembership in secret societies.") [Juhnke, 1989, pp. 116-117]

27. Author Harry Anthony Brunk, a native of Harrisonburg, Virginia and a history professor at Eastern Mennonite College, was not related to Bishop George R. Brunk.

28. It is possible that she simply assumed *I* might equate "traditional" with "backward". However, it is in the context of her entire story that I have interpreted Kate's comment about her teacher as being ambiguous. As we shall see, Kate's commitment to her community is strong but she does not adhere to Mennonite faith unquestioningly. Her ambivalence concerning dress mirrors the gradual transformation of attitudes within the community.

29. The community had not yet established its own day school so, when Martha was a little girl, Mennonite children had early contact with non-Mennonite peers. Given these circumstances, it was natural that she should make friends outside the community.

30. Wenger, John Christian. The Prayer Veil in Scripture and History. Scottdale: Herald Press, 1964.

31. Some of the older women in the Warwick District still wear the covering to church. Only a handful wear it outside of church.

32. Martha implied that dress was not as much of an issue to her when she attended public grade school in the 1930s and early '40s. This was partly because the Mennonite children were not a minority in the school at that time but, even more importantly, the surrounding community was poor, making plain clothing the norm for everyone.

33. The community's book Fifty Years Building on the Warwick (1947) contains many references to members' interest in technology, as a means to improve both business and quality of life.

34. Eastern Mennonite College (EMC) was founded in 1917; Goshen (1903), which developed out of the Elkhart Institute (1894), was closed during the 1923-24 school year as result of controversy over its alleged heretical teachings (Redekop, 1989; p. 181).

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# APPENDIX A

## METHODOLOGY

I have used a mixture of qualitative methodologies in this project. Ethnographic interviewing, the life history approach, oral history methods, participant observation--all these have contributed to the framing of my questions and the conduct of my research.[1] Rather than seeking to test a set of hypotheses about social organization or behavior, endeavoring to prove the predictive value of a new or existing theory, I have studied the symbols used by the Mennonites to make sense of their world. I began my study by listening to some "natives" of the Newport News colony; it was necessary to minimize the effects of my own biases and to learn as much as possible about the meaning my informants attach to their membership in the subject community.[2] Rather than assuming that they are "too close" to the phenomena they describe to grasp the "true" meaning of what is happening to them, I have treated their expressed beliefs as revealing indicators of their social existence. These people spoke to me in the everyday language they use to describe to non-members their thoughts and feelings about their world. The words chosen in the course of conversation are valuable to me precisely because they are not carefully planned; due to the demands of time and the need to respond to questions and puzzled looks, the language of conversation is not subjected to all the second-guessing and self-correction that the process of writing inspires. While such impromptu language is certainly shaped by conventions of conversation, the need to communicate rapidly a complex set of meanings results in the use of words and

expressions that the informant is accustomed to using or hearing others use on a regular basis. Prolonged conversation does therefore provide an opportunity to learn a great deal about what is most important to the speaker and the group to which he or she belongs.

Unfortunately, as condensed as information exchanged in conversation can be at the time of communication, it is later remembered in still more fragmentary ways. Since, under normal circumstances, most of the summarized position communicated by the speaker is forgotten, conversations are usually dismissed as superficial exchanges unsuited for research. However, when the conversation/interview is captured on audio tape and transcribed verbatim, the result is a resource which can be mined repeatedly for new insights into the experience of the speaker. The transcription becomes a cultural text: documentary evidence of individual and collective meanings which are relatively free of the structure imposed by the professionally dictated standards of written language. While the transcribed language is far from being a direct tap into an individual or collective consciousness, it is perhaps one step closer to such intangibles than sources traditionally used by students of human behavior. When used in *combination* with other qualitative methodologies such as archival research and participant observation, then supplemented by findings reported in the scholarly literature, transcriptions of largely unstructured interviews become useful tools for understanding social phenomena in some if not all of their complexity.

The unique contribution of oral history methodology is the more substantial,

more direct role played by the research "subjects." The informants participate more fully in the framing of the research questions than is normally the case and they play a supporting role in plotting the project's course as well. The researcher begins the process by formulating questions while deliberately exploring her own biases. From this self-conscious beginning, she commences interviewing, asking questions which will prompt relatively lengthy, uninhibited reactions. Ideally, these reactions are shaped primarily by the informant's memory and subsequent experiences but, importantly, there is an accepted place in oral history for the interaction of interviewer and informant, the unique rapport between two individuals.

**Access and Rapport**

I met my informants through a series of contacts linking the college to the Mennonite community. The chain began with a conversation between my advisor and the Vice President of Student Affairs. Hearing of my interest in studying the Newport News community, the Vice President suggested I contact a former college employee who grew up there. Through this contact, I was introduced to a second contact who, in turn, gave me the names of my first two informants, Martha and Kate. I was not introduced to Martha and Kate in person; rather, my contact spoke to them by phone before I contacted them by phone myself.

"Networking" was the ideal method for gaining access to the community for I was able to make contact with the group indirectly; I avoided barging in as a total stranger without any connections to the Mennonite world, yet the looseness of my connections allowed me to retain my status as a sympathetic outsider. Both my self-

confidence and my credibility with the informants were bolstered by my connection with the names of trusted friends and relatives. I never actually met my first Mennonite contact person and I spoke in person with the second contact only after months of communicating by telephone. Ultimately, I believe I owe my access to my student status and my informants' respect for learning--as well as their eagerness to respond to genuine interest in their church and way of life. Still, I would not have known who to contact and how to go about it if not for the chain of interested persons who led me to my informants.

The first of these informants became not only my major resource for the project but also a friend. She made available to me--for as long as I should need them--her own irreplaceable books on the colony's history. I attended services at her congregation and through her I met the remaining three informants: the pastor of her congregation and a married couple employed by the military. I was not dealing with informants who were even remotely hostile. Thus, I would never suggest that I alone successfully "established" rapport; All my informants worked for the easy but polite friendliness that developed between us. My major contribution to rapport was simply being honest. I made it clear that I was a rank amateur, just beginning to learn about oral history. I shared some of my background when we first met, described the academic program I am in and told them a little about my hopes for the project. Significantly, my youth and relative inexperience with the type of project we were about to embark on together helped equalize our positions a great deal.

I was very concerned throughout the project about the feelings of the

informants. Maintaining rapport in order retain access was not the chief motivation of my concern, however. More disturbing than the possibility of limiting or even destroying my project was the possibility that I might actually dredge up some terribly upsetting episode or blunder into some embarrassing secret that the informant had not intended to reveal. Obviously, I inflated the power of my project even as I underestimated its worth. Still, I was determined to do nothing to insult the people who were giving generously of their time and themselves so that I might experiment with a research methodology. Fortunately, the form as well as the content of my questions generally matched the circumstances under which they were asked. The questions were appropriately tentative in view of my status as an outsider, a young person and a novice investigator.

Part of my tentativeness arose from my determination not to take advantage of my informants' kindness, particularly because it would be easy to ask too much of people known for their pacifism. I was determined not to act with the same kind of insensitivity that motivated Kate's principal at the public high school; he was recalled with some resentment because of his willingness to single out the eminently reputable Mennonite school children to report on their misbehaving classmates. Realizing that the more subtle pressures of positive stereotypes can exact significant costs of their own, I decided I should err on the side of asking too little rather than asking too much.

As concerned as I was about possibly offending my informants, I did manage to become comfortable almost to the point of complacency. When packing some

clothes for a brief but informative trip to the annual meeting of the Mennonite Church's Virginia conference, I opted for casual clothes which would have been unacceptable for women just a few years ago. I knew from my conversations with new members that shorts were commonly worn by younger women to the outdoor meetings of this retreat held in the foot hills bordering West Virginia. I packed fairly shapeless, utilitarian shorts and t-shirts, thinking I had successfully tread the line between true modesty and an obviously contrived effort at modesty. Suddenly, it occurred to me that I had packed these carefully chosen items in a bag which, although wonderfully light-weight and spacious, seemed somehow inappropriate to me on this occasion: the fabric was the green and khaki camouflage pattern--the type used by the military! As soon as I thought of it, I wondered what the Mennonites I knew would think of my concern. I decided they would probably find the situation humorous; it might even be an interesting conversation piece. These thoughts gave way, however, to the nagging feeling that my growing familiarity might yet breed contempt. After all, I would be meeting many new people who might be offended. I unpacked the bag.

Due to circumstances beyond my control (all part of the adventure of field work) I arrived at the camp on the last morning of the retreat. Even at a gathering of several hundred it was possible to walk up to the information table and talk to someone who knew the family that had invited me to camp out with them. As I looked around, I soon realized that, while shorts may have been appropriate for meetings during the week, almost all the women were wearing skirts or dresses

(albeit casual ones) to this final set of meetings which were to be closed with a worship service. So much for my wardrobe planning.

These minor dilemmas were almost completely unremarkable but for the fact that they indicated, on a small scale, the very subtlety of the forces at work in maintaining the boundaries of the group. Although much has changed in the Virginia Conference in recent years, the Mennonite penchant for debating doctrine and practice lives on. By treating my internal debate as a reflection of the ongoing discussion of group members about what it means to be Mennonite, I began to discover what it might mean to consider the researcher herself to be one of her research tools. Rather than concentrating solely on my own interpretations during research, it was appropriate for me to consider the group members' reactions to *me* to be at least as revealing as my reactions to *them*.

**Strategy**

Choice of Informants

My contact person's choices of open, responsive individuals who would be "good to interview" clearly helped insure that I would select informants who are basically content with the community as it is. I realized that, in accepting these choices without probing more deeply, I was potentially missing my opportunity to learn the true nature of dissent in the group. However, in the early stages of the project, I placed the interest of establishing access and rapport before the important but secondary concern over the representativeness of the informants. In fact, given the names and brief descriptions of cooperative people, I attempted to ease the

process even further by choosing individuals whom I thought would be particularly interested in the social dynamics of their community. By choosing Martha, an amateur historian, and Kate, a teacher, I realized I was limiting my study to the same subgroup of well-educated women. Given the time limitations of this project, however, I rationalized the choice of women from different generations as providing an opportunity to concentrate on the temporal dimension--the changing experience of being Mennonite over the past forty to fifty years--rather than variations according to social class or educational levels. After interviewing Martha and Kate, I attempted to learn more about newcomers to the Mennonite church. I realized that, by not interviewing additional long-time members, including men who grew up in the community, I had not explored "the whole story" of the colony. I also realized that interviewing only three newcomers failed to do justice to that group. In the end, I had to be satisfied with the introduction I was getting to all the issues my informants discussed; I couldn't hope to exhaust the possibilities within the confines of this project.

## Interviewing

In the interest of eliciting the informants' personal interpretations of their experiences in the Mennonite community, I did not use uniform, prepared questionnaires. Although I began with the intention of developing a set of formal questions for use in subsequent meetings with the same informants, I found that the initial informants consistently brought up salient points as they explored their

memories and impressions. Increasingly, I felt unwilling to interrupt the momentum of our informal conversations.

Given the unstructured nature of these conversations, it was particularly important that the tape recordings provide clear records of the informants' words and the tone with which they expressed themselves. Unfortunately, I began with less than ideal equipment. Because the built-in microphone of my small tape recorder was weak and picked up the noise of the recorder's own motor more clearly than my informant's voice, I lost some key phrases from the first interview. I remedied this problem by purchasing a separate microphone which I found worked very well. After that, I believed I was prepared for most technical difficulties by carrying both batteries and an extension cord. Luckily, I discovered in time that the microphone has its own battery and that it has to be removed to prevent power from draining between interviews. Unfortunately, I still managed to lose interview material--most of an hour and a half interview, in fact. I ended the interview myself by punching the pause button then failing to realize that I had not released it again. The greatest irony of all is that I paused the tape in order to avoid recording--and thereby avoid transcribing--my own voice as the informants proceeded to interview me! Although I felt it would be unfair to cut off my informants and try to prevent them from questioning me (after all, we were supposed to be conversing), I also wanted to limit the recording to my informant's responses rather than wasting tape on my own opinions. The sound meter of my tape recorder fooled me into thinking that I had resumed recording; the meter was registering even though the machine was still in

pause mode. I was extremely fortunate that the participants were willing to meet again and that the second interview went very well.

## Transcribing

Although handicapped at times by inappropriate equipment and my own inexperience as an interviewer and transcriber, the interview transcriptions are, with few exceptions, verbatim rather than excerpts or summaries of my conversations. As discussed under, "Ethics" below, it was necessary to remove some identifying names and sections of text that covered material which was spoken in confidence and/or is outside the scope of my project. The interviews are arranged in chronological order, starting in October 1991 and concluding in August 1992. The transcriptions of the last three interviews are the most accurate because I had by that time assembled the best equipment, including a transcribing machine. This was necessary for verbatim transcriptions because a standard tape recorder/player is not only awkward to play back (while typing) but also cuts off sound when taken in and out of playback mode. As a result, key words and noises can be lost. The constant process of playback and rewinding required to compensate is wasteful and frustrating. The clean onset and termination of recorded sound provided by the transcribing machine is indispensable.

I decided early in the transcription process that nothing was gained by transcribing every "mm," "uh" and "like." I did not omit every such "space holding" device, however. When it seemed that the informants were giving more thought to their responses than they might have been doing up to that point, I transcribed

whatever word or sound they paused on. Obviously, any clue to the informants' opinions or feelings is important. I felt that every laugh, exclamation and whisper was significant and I transcribed them or described them accordingly.

While it was possible to record informants' laughter, I had to rely on my memory for facial expressions. Happily, none of the informants frowned. If there had been a great deal of smiling that seemed significant (i.e., smiling during long silences or smiling when the subject matter didn't seem humorous) I would have attempted to follow up on it during the interview. As it happened, however, these informants tended to smile for reasons that seemed easily detectable: they smiled when they thought about good memories, when they recounted funny stories, and, generally, they smiled out of politeness and, I believe, enjoyment of the interviews.

Versatile as it is, the transcript is not in itself an oral history. Instead, the transcript becomes the primary document in the hands of the oral historian who supplements that evidence with secondary sources and, in writing about them, constructs a new interpretation.

## Writing

References to the transcripts are in parentheses [i.e., (B:9)], where the letter refers to the appendix and the number refers to the page number within that same appendix (the appendices are not continuously paginated). I used brackets for several purposes: to fill in information where I couldn't make out informant's words during transcription; to supply information I found elsewhere or gleaned from the

total context of the interview; to make transitions in places where I felt it necessary to remove identifying names or other personal information (see "Ethics" below).

I have chosen to use the past tense (e.g., "she said," "she explained.") because I felt it would be incorrect to imply that these isolated conversations represent "*The* Statement" of the individual, much less of the community. I have not assumed that these interviews, have lives of their own as books and articles might be assumed to have. Since the informants had only a very limited notion of what we would be talking about and participated on the basis of sharing their impressions about "growing up and raising children in the Mennonite community," I think it proper to view their conversations as being just that--impressionistic. It is unnecessary to apologize for the irregularity of their responses for it is precisely the unpredictability of the oral history process which makes it so valuable. Perhaps if these women had been requested to write their answers they may have raised many of the same issues; still, it is unlikely that they could have achieved the same richness and spontaneity.

**Ethics**

The guiding principle of this project has been honesty. I felt that, while I might find it necessary to use vague language with my contact persons and participants--even when I had specific questions or interests in mind--I must nevertheless inform all those involved of my intentions from the outset and remain essentially forthcoming throughout the process. I had no interest in developing elaborate stories or schemes in order to get the informants to talk about something they did not want to reveal. Instead, the project was begun with the anticipation that,

with minimal prompting, the informants would lead the way. Of course, some ethical dilemmas arose despite the relatively straight-forward nature of the project. Before the project began, for example, I considered the possibility of interviewing women from three generations in the same family, as in Corinne Azen Krause's (1991) oral history of several families in Pittsburgh. At the time, however, I felt that there was too great a risk of creating family strife to justify choosing this option.

Having decided to speak to unrelated informants, I still had a somewhat difficult decision to make: these people would undoubtedly know each other; should I reveal the identities of the informants to other informants? I began with the determination not to do so but, when Martha and Kate expressed an interest in knowing, I realized that such secrecy about the identities of people who knew they were friends and probably neighbors seemed awkward to them. I began to be concerned that it might interfere with the friendly rapport we had developed and felt that having to maintain anonymity might put the informants in the untenable position of not being able to discuss their participation in the project. Sensing that a relatively simple matter might be getting out of hand, I simply asked each woman how she felt about the other knowing her identity. Since they seemed more comfortable about knowing and since they had not mentioned each other or made any potentially hurtful remarks in their interviews, I told them both. I did not talk to the other informants about the identities of people I had already interviewed.

All of those who participated did so with the understanding that full names would not be published and that the materials would be used for a school project.

I have tried to pick fictitious names that reflect (without copying exactly) actual naming practices in the group. But, of course, this piecemeal effort makes it impossible to consider naming practices satisfactorily. I chose to assign fictitious names to almost every individual referred to in the project because I thought it might maintain some privacy with respect to "outside readers." Many community members will recognize the informants from other clues. I have agonized on several occasions over the implications my "school project" might have for the kind and generous people who have helped me so much. I can only conclude that what I have reported does not contain any secrets or shocking statements that might cause needless pain. Short of this, I hope I haven't given anyone the uncomfortable feeling of being "under the microscope." To me, the entire experience has been an opportunity to learn from thoughtful people who have many fascinating insights.

# APPENDIX A

## NOTES

1. I have the methods and assumptions described by many authors to be helpful but I do not feel that any of the terms they use adequately describe the form my project eventually took. For more information on these qualitative methodologies, see Denzin (1978), Denzin (1989), McCracken (1988), and Thelen (1990).

2. I prefer the anthropologist's term, "informant", because it best communicates my intention to study their community as something new to me, something sufficiently different from my own experience to warrant reserving my own interpretation in the effort to understand the "native" interpretation.

# APPENDIX B: MARTHA

Summary of information gathered prior to recording:

She was born in Hampton and her family moved to the Newport News Mennonite colony when she was about 2 yrs. old. The colony was between 1200 and 1500 acres. Her maternal grandparents lived just across Colony Road from the house she lives in today.

Her mother's grandfather was a German immigrant who first settled in upstate New York. He was one of the three men who purchased the land for the colony in 1897.

Her maternal grandparents came to the colony from Missouri in a covered wagon. By living there for five years, they "proved" the land and were able to sell it in order to move to Virginia where they bought 100 acres in the Mennonite colony. They wanted to live in a Mennonite community. In Missouri there had been some other Mennonite families homesteading nearby but, as she understands it, her grandparents were the only ones who stayed long enough to stake a claim. Her mother was among the first babies born in the colony (1905).

Her paternal grandfather was born in Hagerstown, Maryland. Her grandmother was born in Winchester, Virginia. Both sets of grandparents farmed. Her maternal grandparents' farm was a second home to Martha. She has vivid memories of her grandparents' stall at the cooperative market in downtown Newport News.

Martha: Earlier, the different families in the colony had each taken their produce, their cream or butter and peddled it door-to-door. Then a farmers' market, a cooperative was formed. They each had stands. [She remembers going to market with her grandparents] Market was held two days a week, Wednesdays and Saturdays . . . a lot of things were raised for market. Another cooperative was a milk distributing dairy. . . my grandparents also belonged to that too . . .
My husband's family had a large farm. The farms in the colony were small. So what I remember growing up, with my grandparents, was going to market and raising things for their market stand. There was corn, wheat, hay for the cows . . . the market was more interesting because . . . when the jonquils were blooming, they picked jonquils and arranged them nicely on the table [other flowers such as] bachelor buttons would naturalize in the fields. That was fun [we children would pick those for display/sale? at the market]. [My grandmother would make] dozens and dozens and dozens of doughnuts . . . They butchered hogs, smoked hams and

made wonderful sausage, made scrapple--whatever there was: apples, grapes, cherries, butter beans, potatoes, anything [laughs]. And this was one of many stands at the farmers' market. And I suppose each had their specialties but I don't remember what they were. My grandparents--we thought their smoked sausage was simply the best; everyone *knew* that grandma's doughnuts were the best! [laughs]

SIBLINGS: There are four of us. My older sister, 18 mo. older than I, is [name deleted]. Her married name is [name deleted]. She lives in Amelia County about an hour west of Richmond. I have two younger brothers. The older is James. The younger is Warren. They both still live in the colony. Jim has been a building contractor. He is in real estate. Warren works for him as a manager. [Warren married a local girl] Jim married a girl from Hagerstown . . . [after about 7 ? years] they divorced. There was a second marriage. There are four children from his first marriage . . . they're all young adults now . . . none of them live here. Warren's children live here. His younger daughter is a lawyer the older one is working in a hospital, I believe.

My brother [James] lives in a house which was a barn; . . . my father was a contractor --he was 30 when he died. [He accomplished many things] before his death: raising four children and building quite a few structures during the Depression--we don't know how he did it. He built a rather large horse barn for someone . . . so [James] is now living in the barn his father built. Warren lives in the house we grew up in . . .

We have two children: Carol--she is divorced. She has one child, Meg, she is eight. We're just wild about her. Carol is the manager of an apartment complex . . . we're really proud of her business ability. And we have another son, Paul, jr., who is 31. He's a designer with a marine architectural firm. He lives in the farmhouse my husband grew up in . . . Our two children are adopted. Our youngest son, at 17, was killed in an automobile accident.

MARTHA'S MOTHER: Her life, since her death occurred just about two months ago, her life has come into strong focus. She was widowed at 31 and as long as we were around she didn't remarry. So she was our parent. She was a small person . . . I was very secure with her. I thought she could do anything, I thought she could take care of anything. I never doubted for a moment that we would be taken care of. She was always home and that was not unusual . . . but even compared to other women she was considered a stay-at-home [person]. She was a person who know what she was about. She made up her own mind about things . . . There were

unwritten rules; you knew what you should and what you should not do but you would not have found them in a church book. She was a traditional person but [?] of that set of rules. As a child I remember very much claiming the Mennonite church; it was very secure. She made it clear that if this is what you're choosing, you must be loyal . . . I think I knew that she did not particularly agree with everything . . . So that would say a lot about her: she was a very faithful person . . . She sewed beautifully, she was artistic. So, as I realize now, [though we were certainly impoverished?] her appearance was nice, our appearance was nice, our home was nice . . . but it was her sense of what looked right, what worked. She was not a very demonstrative person . . . My grandparents were more expressive, more emotional people. [My mother was] very soft spoken. She was always sure in the summer and fall there were enough fruits and vegetables canned . . . She'd say "count the peaches" and if there were a hundred quarts of peaches, then she thought she thought she had enough. But she did enjoy housekeeping. It didn't make me want to be a housekeeper or to be a housewife or to be a farmer's wife . . .

I liked who I was, I liked living here and being that person. I liked being a Mennonite. I had friends who didn't. I claimed it and I thought I was fortunate. I think it was because it wasn't so much imposed on me but something [?]. . . I thought I was pretty lucky. I remember in the 4th grade when I really started to study Virginia history I was captivated with this story of Virginia. Earlier, in the 3rd grade, I had gotten a hold of an old Mennonite history book and read that. . . (This is the first time it occurred to me) "Oh, I am a Mennonite." I only read it because I had nothing else to read. If there had been anything else to read I would not have read that book! [laughs] I was desperate that summer for reading. So I read that old red book called Mennonite Church History. Then I went into the 4th grade and met Virginia history. I remember thinking how fortunate I was: "I'm an American, and I'm a Virginian, and I'm a Mennonite." I couldn't imagine being more fortunate than that! [LAUGHS]

I think my position in the family was comfortable. I was always really glad I wasn't the oldest because [I was aware that my sister, as the oldest . . . ?] My interests when I was growing up were--the animals. I always tried to collect as many animals as I could. When baby rabbits were found in the orchard, I raised those. People sometimes had baby chicks that were not treated well by their parents and so the neighbors would give them to me because I soon got a reputation as a caretaker of unwanted animals. So I thought that, rather than being a farmer's wife or a nurse or any of the things that [people thought women should be], I really thought I would be a veterinarian. The garden [I really came to dislike]. I still do.

[laughs]

. . . We had access to our grandparents' farm; we just went in and out of their house as if it were our own. Surely our grandparents must have wished that we weren't always [running?] around . . . [My great aunt lived] just down the road. She was not married. She was a nurse and had built a little bungalow. So, although that would not seem [close?] today for someone to be somebody's great aunt, she was part of our family. . . and I would say, she had a lot of [input?] about how we should be raised--a lot of people had their input . . . so we were raised--it was really an extended family.

WAS IT [RAISING YOUR FAMILY] A COMMUNITY EFFORT?

It was more of a family--it was a family effort rather than--I think there was always an *awareness*, sure, of the community and what was appropriate . . . we were made to feel really ashamed and guilty if we did anything that . . . we were to get good grades, to be well-dressed, always act in a manner [?] . . .

WAS THERE A LOT OF PRESSURE?

We didn't view it as pressure.

THAT YOU KNOW OF, DURING YOU CHILDHOOD, WAS YOUR MOTHER COURTED BY MEN?

I'm not sure, I'm not sure. Yes, before I was married. As a child, after my father died, I remember trying to get her to promise she would not remarry. In my memory, in my childhood understanding, I thought she promised me that. I'm sure she didn't promise that but, anyway, I had the feeling it would be all right.

YOU WERE PRETTY SURE SHE WOULDN'T [REMARRY]?

I had the feeling she promised me she wouldn't. But on reflection she probably didn't; she probably just said something to satisfy me. She remarried after [28?] years. We were all married [by that time] . . . it was a good marriage; ten years earlier I wouldn't have liked it . . . well, yes, there was someone [before that] but we didn't think he was appropriate . . . A card, probably a Valentines card, came in the mail to her and she was away and I sensed what it was so I opened the kitchen stove

and threw it in the flames. So that's how I took care of that! [LAUGHS] Ooo! I never told her that. [LAUGHS] I would just tell her what she would have told me: it was for her own good! [LAUGHS]

HOW OLD WERE YOU?

At that time? I was a teenager. Probably about 16.

TELL ME ABOUT YOUR PLAYMATES. WERE COUSINS INCLUDED?

Later on we had cousins. We were the only grandchildren for a number of years. That was pretty special. So my playmates until I went to school, with few exceptions, were my brothers and sister. When I went to school, I had [a few?] friends; I had a special friend, Emily Scott, in the 1st grade. In the 3rd grade she moved away. And I thought, "Oh, now, who will be my friend?" And at that point, some girls that I had started out in school with--Martha, Ana Mae and Velma . . . and they dressed a little different from the other girls. I would see them in church but [?]. . . [they came to me and said] "You should really be our friend. You are a Mennonite." I thought, "Ooo. Alright." You know, it was a time I needed a friend and so at that point I had a Mennonite identity. But I really didn't know I was a Mennonite until then.

I remember at that time most of the Mennonite girls wore long sleeves, and now everyone wears long sleeves but at that time other girls wore short sleeves or little cap sleeves and very short dresses. And for some reason my mother dressed us [according to the non-Mennonite fashion] . . . I begged for braids [my playmates had them] . . . [Martha thinks she told her mother she wanted dresses with long sleeves] . . . But I do remember when my mother gave me a long-sleeved dress and [that I] begged for braids. I remember letting my hair grow and when it got long enough to put it in a rubber band and then, finally, it was long enough to braid. So then I felt very Mennonite. It was a very small group.

I started 5th grade. I was walking around the play ground out at Denbigh. I didn't go to church school. [There was no church school at that time.] One of my friends, probably Velma (?) told me, "My mother says you wear your dresses too short." I thought--Oh! I wasn't going to do anything to lose, you know, be out of favor with this group. She said, "Well, why don't you get your mother to make them longer." But then I also wasn't going to tell my mother that because I was saving her feelings . . .

WELL, HOW DID YOU SOLVE THAT?

I guess they were short! [Laughs] I guess they were short! I don't know. It was a time when--I don't know if you've seen pictures of little girls in the 30s and 40s with Shirley Temple hair and [little dresses that] were *really* short!

MY MOTHER SUFFERED THROUGH THAT. DID YOU WEAR THE LITTLE PANTIES?

Yes, that matched the dresses, yes. [Laughs]

SHE *HATED* THAT! WHAT ABOUT THE WINTER? DID YOU GET TO WEAR SNOW PANTS?

Yes, we had leggings and then the other Mennonite girls wore long brown stockings --but only the Mennonites wore stockings. So I think then at that point in the winter, my mother put me in the [long brown stockings]. I *think* some of the Mennonite girls never wore socks.

YEAR AROUND?

Year around. They either went barefoot--not at school--or wore stockings . . .

THAT'S INTERESTING. I CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT THAT MUST HAVE FELT LIKE. DIDN'T IT GET RATHER WARM IN THE SUMMER?

Oh, *yes*, yes! Yes, it certainly does. It may not be right but that's what I recall. And so there was that difference, we knew--the dresses were long . . . Our granddaughter, when she was four or five, wore long dresses below her knee because that's what little girls were wearing and my mother who was eighty said, "why is she wearing her dresses so long?" I said that's how they're wearing them now! [laughs]

HOW WOULD YOU SAY IT WENT IN SCHOOL . . . DID YOU DEVELOP A FEELING OF BEING DIFFERENT?

Not in grade school. The school was small at Denbigh . . . in our grade, probably half the children were Mennonite. The community at that time was a poor community. So it was not uncomfortable to be a Mennonite. We did well

academically. What was your question? . . . Did we feel different?

YES. IF SO, HOW DID YOU FEEL ABOUT THAT?

I don't remember feeling that different. My brother says he did. He says . . . when he went to school, the first grade, he was called a "flat-headed Dutchman". I don't remember anyone calling me anything but he said he felt . . . my husband, Paul, says he remembers being referred to as a Dutchman . . . I don't remember any activities that we didn't take part in. We were full participants in elementary school and it wasn't until I went to high school--then we did feel alienated (?).

DID IT HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH BEING A TEENAGER?

I'm sure it was that and the school was large--that was just a small elementary school and this was the only high school, the only white high school in [the area]. My mother had gone to the same high school and loved it. And she participated much more fully in the life of the school than I did. At that time [when Martha was growing up] in the colony there did come in a more conservative element. The dress became more conservative. A lot of the girls, most of the girls--I did not--but most of the girls wore a white cap. Are you familiar with that?

YES.

And twenty years earlier, my mother and her friends did not. It became more different. We had long hair. When my mother went to high school, *everyone* had long hair. So, there just was not that difference. But [with us] there was a difference--we didn't wear makeup. It was during World War II; we were pacifists. So we didn't enter into some of the pep rallies and other events . . . we were [pause] we were restrained in our feelings--not among ourselves--but within our school. We went to our parties and literary society, we got together always for [?] and it was unrestrained. But at school . . . and we would go to the pep rallies before the football game and we were supposed to shout out "Rah, Rah, Rah!" And I found it difficult. And there were the high school dances and we didn't go. Of course, at the elementary school there was not that, there were no dances. The girls were too young to wear makeup.

THERE WERE A LOT OF CHANGES TO DEAL WITH ANYWAY [IN HIGH SCHOOL]

Yes. So it was more about participation. But on reflection, the school would have been glad if we had participated more fully. It was there for us. It was something somehow we didn't [do?] . . . I was [withdrawn from school activity] more than my sister. She participated much more fully in the school.

THERE ARE INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES TOO . . . WHAT WAS IT LIKE IN YOUR GROUP OF FRIENDS OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL . . . YOUR PEER GROUP DURING HIGH SCHOOL?

We started dating rather early. But we didn't, or, the dating pattern was to start dating at about 14 or 15. But we did not go steady. We did not have one boyfriend or girlfriend. And the occasions would be--on Tuesday night we had literary society, it was a club, with a president and vice president and critic and we would have programs. The kids did it themselves. The ages were probably from 14 or 15 till marriage . . . and so that was probably the highlight of the week for most kids. We had our own church building--I mean, our own literary building. It was on church property but it was for the kids . . . [I don't remember what they called us] probably young folks or teenagers. So, that took up a lot of time. And we were supposed to have special music which meant . . . a girls' trio, a mixed quartet. We learned to sing, read music very early. By fourth grade, I could sing with three other girls, four-part music. From fourth grade on, we did that. Unaccompanied. So that was always good. You would choose some girls or boys you wanted to be with and practice music. That was all we could practice with, (?). It was a very innocent age. [laughs]

THAT'S WHAT MY MOM ALWAYS SAYS!

And we were unchaperoned. And we didn't need it. There was just really an unspoken rule that everyone in the community was home by 11 or 12. That was when the peer pressure came. I don't remember my mother having a lot of dos and don'ts but it was the community dos and don'ts. You were very careful about your reputation. There was the peer pressure.

THAT ALMOST TOOK THE PLACE OF PARENTAL RULES?

I think it did for me. There were several things--and my mother was a rather cautious person . . . as a teenager, I remember, there were several things [about which] she put her foot down. And if she did, there was no chance; that was it. And one was that I was not allowed, my sister and I were not allowed, to go to a slumber party unless it was in someone's home; but the fun thing was to have it in a barn or out in a meadow--something like that. And that was not allowed. Another thing was, if we ever got to go to the beach, she thought that was a real physical danger--we may drown. So those are the two things I can remember I would see other girls do that I couldn't do. But I don't remember any cautions, any curfews, a list of boys I could or could not date. That was up to me. I knew if I came in after 12, it was really not good. But not only not good in my mother's eyes; maybe not good for the neighbor or my grandmother or the boy's parents or whoever heard about it . . . there were some parents who had their children in by 11. (We thought that was a little early.)

We usually double dated; went for boat rides, went for walks, went to church. And often after church or after we went to literary we would stand out in some convenient circle where we would be talking as if we had no idea the boys were around. But we knew exactly where they were. And then someone would come up and say, "could I see you home?" That really sounds Victorian but that's how it was! [laughs] There were wiener roasts and hay rides. And we did not go to the skating rinks because that was sort of outside our environment. So if there was a particularly smooth part of paved road in the colony that was our skating area. And on Friday nights we would have skatings. The word would go out that there would be a skating. The traffic was so sparse in the colony that if indeed we saw headlights coming up the road all the skaters just simply got off the ice, waited for the car to go by and started skating again. It was the skater's responsibility. And we would also skate in [a] barn when the hay was gone; we would sweep it out and skate. That was fun. But, yes, the restraints did come from the community.

IT SOUNDS LIKE FOR THE MOST PART YOU WERE WALKING. WERE MOST THINGS WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE?

It was for us but not for everyone. Where my husband was growing up . . . occasionally during the gas rationing of WWII they would ride bikes. There were always cars. As a child I could walk to a friend's house.

MOST OF YOUR FRIENDS LIVED CLOSE BY?

Within a mile, yes. They were available.

IT WASN'T UNUSUAL TO WALK A MILE?

Oh, no. Oh, no.

YOU MENTIONED THAT AT A CERTAIN POINT THEY STARTED WEARING WHITE CAPS . . . TELL ME MORE ABOUT THAT.

It didn't start [at that point], but I think it was worn for church services. Names for that, when I was growing up, were "devotional covering" and "the prayer veiling"; they were white knit. I think probably in the 20s and 30s [there was] a more conservative element. It was probably a church-wide, Mennonite church-wide trend. But there was a very staunch conservative bishop, George Brunk the First, here. He was a very authoritarian man. He knew what was going on. I think he helped build a strong community. The discussion is still going on: how would things have differed if that strong personality had not been here? He arrived about a decade after the colony began. So that's still being
discussed. So probably it was that. It did reflect a church-wide movement.

IT WASN'T THAT YOU NECESSARILY STARTED WEARING DEVOTIONAL CAPS AT SCHOOL--JUST AT CHURCH?

No, they did [wear them at school]. I didn't. It was a decision that a girlfriend of mine and I made. I think the girls older than I did.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR SISTER?

I think she did not. But many did. And then girls that were younger than I also did.

DO YOU REMEMBER HOW YOUR FRIEND AND YOU DECIDED NOT TO?

Well, I remember discussing it. We did not in grade school and we were starting high school and were aware that the other Mennonite girls did. . . so we began to question the reasons for it and the pluses and minuses and we couldn't come up with many pluses. And it was not a church rule however it was a statement if you did you [signaled] your undying loyalty to the true principles [of the church]. She had an aunt that I guess she was close to and we were aware that she made up her own mind about things. I remember when we talked to this aunt-- of course we chose someone that we thought may tell us what we wanted to know. I remember we discussed it with her; interestingly, we did not discuss it with the minister or our parents. But we discussed with her. And my mother, we did not--she may have been . . . I don't remember that there was any encouragement to wear this or not to wear this. This was something she felt I could make my own decision on.

DO YOU THINK YOUR FRIENDS HAD THE SAME KIND OF FREEDOM TO MAKE UP THEIR OWN MINDS?

I think they would have. I think most of them would have done it [worn the caps] but I think they could have [made up their own minds], yes. I'm sure it was . . . but that was the issue that I recall . . . I would not have dared wear makeup. You knew you could not get from here to there. That was [?], nor would I have cut my hair. That would have been a church rule. But it was not a church rule to wear this cap all the time. that was somehow made by some of the more conscientious, pious, conservative members as a way to show more of the support. . . I'm sure there were other, that's just what I recall . . . of course everyone still knew we were Mennonite because we wore braided hair. And we felt we were attractive probably to our group but not attractive to the student body. And maybe 10 or 15 years ago I found a picture of myself sitting in a wheat field with this ripened wheat around me and these braids around my head and I thought I looked so nice and I thought, what a waste--I never knew it! [Laughs]

WHAT WAS THE FASHION IN HAIR STYLES THEN?

Oh, it was short, very permanent hair. Do you remember the movies, the WWII movies? The old black and white ones? . . . we didn't go to the movies but we still knew the movie stars. So that was a big difference.

THAT'S INTERESTING THAT YOU KNEW ABOUT THE MOVIE STARS WITHOUT GOING TO THE MOVIES.

I don't know how but we knew who they were and knew about there lives.

WHAT OTHER THINGS DID YOU DO OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL?

We went to concerts, to music programs . . . we went to more concerts than most teenagers would have gone to because we didn't go to movies. Particularly we would go to Hampton University--it was Hampton Institute then--to hear the Messiah. We all learned the Messiah, the solos and the choruses. So we did have that education. At that time we probably felt--it was what we wanted--but we felt that there was a whole other world that we didn't know about and indeed we didn't. But I think probably that there was a world we were learning that other people weren't . . . We would go to lectures, we would go to boring things! When Paul and I were dating, we went to a debate on whether Newport News and Hampton and the county should consolidate. I could not imagine our children ever going to something like that. But we took these issues seriously. We debated, read the newspapers, discussed--we had opinions about everything . . . [what else did we do?] particularly chorus groups because we sang well. Choral groups from Russia, they would come to the college--William and Mary or Hampton.

DID YOU HAVE A RADIO?

Well, we did until the '30s. And then, the conservative element I was talking about, uh; there was a rule passed, I think, in the Virginia Conference that you should not have radios. I recall that our family still had one. And I don't recall this, but I recall my mother telling me this: one day a young minister--very young; he was in his 20s, his early twenties and my parents were in their late 20s--he came during the day when my mother was home. He knew we had a radio. And he said, "Don't you think you could give that up?" And my mother said, "Yes, well I guess we could." And so she told me later that my father was very upset that this minister came and talked to her instead of waiting until he was home and discussing it with him. He felt that was really not right. But I do remember that next time we went to visit my grandparents, uncles and aunts in Hagerstown, we loaded up this old radio with the curves, you know, and took it to my grandparents. So we didn't have a radio from the early 30s until probably 1945. And then it was weakening and people had radios when they weren't supposed to; or teenage children would have radios in their bedrooms and downstairs you would be visiting with their parents and they would apologize for the sound that was coming from the upstairs bedroom but, in fact, it

was Sammy's radio and not theirs. So then when that starting happening more and more then that was changed. . . A lot of rules, then, were changed by default, rather than action. They seldom said, "Now you may have a radio." They rather said, when probably 60-75% of the people had them, they cautioned that radios be discretely used and listed all of the evils and dangers involved. So that was how it was handled.

Second Interview

TELL ME ABOUT RAISING YOUR CHILDREN. WHAT INFLUENCED YOU?

It's easier to talk about when you were a child or about your grandchild than your own children. I think you feel more secure. What influenced me?

I UNDERSTAND YOU ADOPTED YOUR CHILDREN. HOW DID THAT COME ABOUT?

Well, through a lot of perseverance! [Laughs] We were married 7 years before Carol came. She was 6 months old and we adopted her through the Children's Home Society in Richmond. Two and a half years later, Paul, jr. came and I think two and a half years after that, Michael. So we adopted 3 children who were pre-school children, so they were all home [for a while] before they started at school and that was nice!

HOW HAD YOU DECIDED TO ADOPT? WAS THERE EVER ANY QUESTION?

Whether we would adopt or not? I don't think there was ever any question whether we would have children. When children didn't come and it looked like there would not be children--I don't remember us ever sitting down and saying, "Now will we adopt or will we not?" It was sort of "When? When do we do this?" So after 5 years, we started that process. Just couldn't wait!

DID IT TAKE LONG?

Two years, the first child, two years.

WHAT DID YOU HAVE TO GO THROUGH?

There was a lot of screening: first a visit in Richmond then home visits and then waiting. We did relax after we were told we were accepted for prospective parenthood.

WERE YOU IN THIS HOME BY THAT TIME?

No we were not. We were living at [Paul's family's] dairy farm. We lived there until our children were teenagers, actually. So they grew up on a farm with a large extended family. Paul's parents lived in the big frame house that is still there [in the midst of an urbanized area in Newport News]. That area was the family farm. There's still about 40 acres there with old buildings and a house. so that is the area that Paul's father, and grandfather and great-grandfather came to. At the same time this colony was settled . . . it's about 4 miles from the colony. So we built a small brick home on the farm. That's the home our children remember their childhood. The house was not spacious but the farm was. They had a lot of freedom there. You asked what were the influences?

YES, YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT CHILDREN, ABOUT RAISING THEM, ABOUT FAMILY.

Although Paul and I came from the same Mennonite community and went to the same church, the families were very different. Probably, then, our children have a strong identity [with their father's family], rather than [Martha's family of origin]. They would identify with Paul's family. It was a very, very strong family. Paul had a brother and has three sisters and he and his brother worked at the farm and later were partners in the business. His mother was very strong-- she was a small person. She was an extrovert; she liked to have people just come in to the house all the time. So that large house was always filled with friends, with family, with grandchildren. Somebody called it the house of the open door and it really was. So that was a big influence on how we raised our children. My home was more sedate. It was structured; we went to bed at a certain time: 8 o'clock. Almost all my life we went to bed so early, I was ashamed to tell anyone at school how early we went to bed! It was orderly. There was no excuse for something not done well. We were a quiet family. My mother was always on top of things and always in control but I never remember her raising her voice. I never heard her raise her voice nor did I ever hear my grandparents do that. It was quiet, restrained, gentle. And [Paul's] family was not unlike that but it was much noisier, schedules were loser. Bedtimes were sort of when the child fell asleep. There was a strong discipline but voices were raised.

The family loved to discuss--I would have called it arguing; they called it discussion. It was developed to a fine art. Other people would be uncomfortable but this family who loved being together and were together *constantly*, never got enough of each other. They just discussed and discussed and discussed; would sit around the kitchen table talking about all these issues while Grammy, Paul's mother, would make coffee and pour it as long as people would drink it! So there was that difference. They liked to sit up to discuss things until 12 o'clock at night and then they thought it was time to go to bed. So that was very different.

EVEN THOUGH THEY HAD TO GET UP RATHER EARLY FOR THE FARM DUTIES? IT WAS A DAIRY FARM, WASN'T IT?

It was, it was a large dairy farm and they had milkers so they didn't-- I don't think anyone got up unusually early. Probably at 7 though.

WHAT WAS YOUR LIFE LIKE OVER THERE?

I felt-- I enjoyed it, it was always interesting, it was exciting. I felt glad to be part of this fun, interesting family. On the other hand, I felt emersed in it and sort of lost my identity. So I struggled with that too.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO RAISE A FAMILY SORT OF UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF ANOTHER FAMILY?

It was wonderful and it was terrible! [Laughs] And I think if things were balanced out, the advantages certainly outweighed the disadvantages. On looking back, I realize that I used a lot of that strength of that family to be the control or the conscience for my family; just, I think, as my mother did for the community in which we lived. I don't think I would do that again. I would be more verbal in what I believed and what I expected. And have it more centered in our household rather than in the compound in which the children were raised.

DID THE DISTANCE FROM THE COLONY AFFECT YOUR LIVES AT ALL?

[pause] I don't--No. I don't think it did. No, I don't think so. Still, the church was the center of your world. I don't think so.

WAS IT A ONCE-A-WEEK CHURCH SERVICE THAT WOULD HAVE BROUGHT YOU INTO THE COLONY?

No it would have been more than that. Often, every day, you were involved in something. Our children went to the parochial school which was started between the time I went to school and they were born. So that was a tie-in to the colony and some of that time we furnished transportation for them. So there was a lot of going back and forth. My mother lived here. There was a community paper called The Tide which is still in existence. I helped with that so that was news gathering, typing and working with the staff. That took a lot of time. And entertaining and just having functions for people.

DID YOU REPORT FOR THE NEWSLETTER? WHAT KINDS OF INFORMATION DID YOU GATHER?

There was a church page. The different Mennonite churches in the area would do that reporting. Then the pages that just reported the comings and goings and happenings of the Mennonite community is called "Ebb and Flow". I was editor for part of that time. We collected any news we could. If they had anything to sell

from a tractor to a home to a typewriter, we had classified ads, we announced the births of babies, engagements, we wrote up weddings; we published letters from people who had moved from the community. When someone took a trip, we asked them to write it up, so we sort of ran this travel log. Anything. So that was something that helped tie the community together. The children in the school would write little articles for The Tide.

ASIDE FROM FORMER NEIGHBORS WHO HAD MOVED AWAY, WAS THERE COMMUNICATION WITH THE LARGER MENNONITE COMMUNITY? NATIONALLY, WORLD-WIDE?

With this paper or in our lives? Yes, there was. I think the paper helped but even without that there were church publications that we were aware of. In traveling today as you go to Minnesota or South Dakota or Kansas, you are aware of the Mennonite communities. We had a young friend who became a Mennonite and she traveled with us. She said "you know, the thing about being a Mennonite is you always have someone, there is always someone that you have!" Because we were in Indiana, I believe, and we looked up friends and she thought that was wonderful. She's in Hawaii now and is even connecting with the Mennonite church there.

SHE JOINED THE CHURCH ON HER OWN?

Yes.

HOW MUCH HAS THE INTERNATIONAL FOCUS OF THE MENNONITE CHURCH BEEN FELT IN YOU LIVES?

Paul and I have lived our lives here. Paul's brother, soon after he was married, went in the late '50s, I believe--to Indonesia--for a 3-year service with a relief organization that embraces all the branches of the Mennonite and Amish churches. Mennonite Central Committee, we call it MCC. Paul's sister at the same time, after her marriage, she and her husband--during that same time--went to Korea for three years to be head of an orphanage. Later that same sister spent 14 or 15 years in Jamaica. They're now in Trinidad. Paul has another sister who with her family went to Ethiopia to serve as house parents for a school for missionary children. That sister is now in Kenya at Nairobi, as hostess of a guest house in Nairobi. Paul and I have simply stayed home and said "goodbye" and "hello" [laughs] but our lives have been touched. Our daughter spent a year in Ethiopia with her cousin in Addis Ababa at this missionary school when she was 16, just for the experience it would give her. And we have friends in Europe. We have made friends in the Mennonite communities. We have a close friend in Amsterdam who has visited in this community perhaps 3 or 4 times and we have visited there 2 or 3 times. We went to the world conference in Winnipeg last year and our daughter went with us. That's held every 6 years. The next conference will be held in India

so we're not sure we'll go there or not! So, there is an awareness, yes. Of the international scene.

WHAT IS THE FOCUS OF THE CONFERENCE?

The focus of the world conference really is not issues, it's sort of getting to know each other and promoting an awareness of the needs of the different people in the different countries. I think 70 countries were represented at the last conference. It's hoped that there will be a time of renewal, but it's not issue-oriented.

IS IT MORE INTERNAL TO MENNONITE CHURCH MEMBERS? RENEWAL OF THE GROUP ITSELF OR IN GENERAL?

I think I meant a renewal of the ideas of the basic philosophy of this Mennonite witness in the world. What does it mean? Is it a worthwhile thing? Does it have a unique contribution?

WHAT ROLE DO YOUNG PEOPLE PLAY IN THIS KIND OF QUESTIONING?

Teenagers? Young adults? I think there is. There was an assembly in Oregon this summer and from this community probably a dozen teenagers and their youth sponsors flew out to Eugene for most of the week with several thousand other teenagers from all over the country. So there is that encouragement to be involved.

I WONDER HOW YOU THINK YOUR CHILDREN HAVE EXPERIENCED, MAYBE IN RELATION TO YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE, GROWING UP IN THE COMMUNITY AND THE CHURCH.

Our daughter became a member and she very much has a Mennonite identity. And I can see that our granddaughter, Meg who is eight, is also forming a Mennonite identity and how that comes I don't know because I wondered myself how it's done. Our son, who is 31, Paul, does not seem to have a Mennonite identity and has not joined, has never chosen to join the Mennonite church.

I WONDER HOW YOU CONCEPTUALIZE THE MENNONITE IDENTITY, I KNOW IT'S DIFFICULT BUT YOU'VE ALREADY SORT OF EXPLORED THAT.

I'm not sure because I was curious about that also. When we went to high school, we looked different, we felt different, and didn't share the same experiences with the other people. So we had that. And I asked Carol, our daughter, and some of her friends (I should ask her again) how do you feel? Do you feel Mennonite when you're in school? I thought they said, "yes, we do." I was curious about why.

To me, their appearance was not different but, to them, there were subtle differences. Probably their dress was not--they may have been conscious of it--but it didn't quite have the label appearance of their peers'. They would have had an accountability not only to their parents but also to their church or community of faith that probably many of the kids in school did not have. So I think that's one thing that forms a pretty strong identity. What will my parents think? What will my grandmother think? What will the preacher think? What will the preacher's daughter who is my best friend think? You know, this is all part of it. Does that answer the question?

MAYBE IT WOULD HELP TO BETTER UNDERSTAND, WHAT WAS IT YOU SAID? THE MENNONITE "WITNESS"?

I'm not sure what I said now.

IS IT A UNIQUE APPROACH TO CHRISTIANITY?

From a young adult's point of view?

IN YOUR OPINION.

There is always this idea that, yes, you are an American but, first of all, there is this other kingdom to which you belong. And you're never quite as American as most people are. You may be more obedient, you may cause the country less trouble, you may pay your taxes--everything better than average. But there is always that reservation that, first of all, there is another kingdom that has your citizenship and probably someone 16 would not verbalize it like that but I think it would still be felt. Largely because we are pacifists. And during the, what did they call it? The Gulf--did they call it war? You always knew that you were walking in another way. In church, when we would solicit prayers from members who knew of family or friends that were involved--going through your head, now, how do we pray for these people without it sounding like we're supporting the war? *Always* there is the tension in that. We would not have flown the--tied the yellow ribbons. You were just aware that there was a difference. That would be a big one.

Traditionally, there's always been a point at which--in this community, anyway--you backed up from a certain involvement. The businessmen at one point (it's changing now) knew that if there was a problem, they could not sue. Going to court was something apart from what our church understood. So it was things like that that you were always aware of. And are still there a bit but not a lot. At church, one of the churches, there is a class now that is probably for 10 weeks, each Tuesday night and the discussion is peacemaking without conflict. And so each Tuesday night at least 20 people from churches in this area meet to discuss how we are at peace--how do we do this without conflict. So it's always there, that awareness.

There is accountability taught, as I mentioned before, and that is difficult for

some people that are new to the Mennonite faith. I think the concept of accountability which is sort of an underlying thing in our churches and in our community is sometimes difficult for people to understand and we work with the individualistic spirit that our ministers decry sometimes as being so prevalent in America. So these are the things we hear that make us think, yes, this is our identity. There are a lot of service things but I think every church would have those, I'm not sure the Mennonite church would have more than others. We have the relief organizations. A lot of the young folks are urged to give 1 to 3 years to some service organization. At our little church of perhaps a 120 members, there is a couple serving in their early 30s I guess, they're in China for two years teaching english. Another couple, in their 30s, with two children, are in Mississippi, teaching or working with the Indians. Another young family is in Texas working with a group there. Paul's sister and husband are in Nairobi for a term which they're terminating this year. I think another family is in Winnipeg. She is teaching in special ed. with the Indian children and he is trying to start up some kind of recycling business, working with the MCC. So I think that proportion of people in a small group is large. So there is that emphasis. "What are you doing? What are you doing?" [laughs] But it's really not heavy.

IT DOESN'T SEEM OPPRESSIVE?

No, no.

IT SEEMS LIKE SOMETHING YOU CHOOSE?

Right.

CAN YOU THINK OF ANY OCCASIONS IN YOUR CHILDREN'S CHILDHOOD THAT WERE MEMORABLE?

They always had cousins to play with. We were the only family that lived on the farm itself but the farm was open and Grammy's house was open for all the cousins to come and play. And so they did. However, this was not quite a usual family or the usual thing for the Mennonite community. Even at that time, the rest of the community said, "Oh, my goodness, how can Grammy stand it or how can you bear it?" So it was curious even then. So I will say that this was not regular but it was our experience. In the summertime, they would walk down the lane, perhaps 200 feet, to see who was there. They had free reign over the farm. Our children were expected when they came home for lunch to stay home for several hours and at least break that intensive playtime and read or draw or do something. So they were house-bound for a number of hours. Then, they were ready to go.

We had a guest one time. I learned to know him later and he was a lot of fun. But Paul told me he had invited this man--he was going to help with some estate planning or business planning--he was picking him up at the airport but he

would bring him over for dinner. I planned a dinner then called the three children in and this man came and he was a tall, tall slender man in a black suit and a dark tie; and he looked almost austere and he was very quiet and spoke very softly. We did get our children to the table but several cousins came in and sat in the living room until these kids could finish their evening meal; they had been playing in the barn; they had been playing hockey. They had put on roller skates and gotten brooms and they had improvised a hockey game and it was really a hot game! So I remember several of the cousins in the living rooms, sitting impatiently, dangling their feet while we were eating some beef stew at our dining room table. And Michael was probably 4 or 5 and he said, "Can we be excused?" And I said "No, we're not through." And [our guest], who had been doing the talking in his slow, gentle voice, looked down at his plate and his meal was still there. And he said, "Oh, I guess I'm eating too slowly." And to quickly put him at ease, I dishonestly said, "Oh, no! You're not." And Michael said, "HE IS, HE IS!!" [laughs] And it didn't get any better. [laughs] So, the children were excused and dashed out the door, to their play again. So that was pretty much how it was. They remember their childhood as being a time of magic, just a time of magic.

I think I mentioned that Carol had a stronger Mennonite identity. She had some older girl cousins whose father was the minister of the church. So they would kind of control Carol's thinking, or how she should dress, or whatever. So Carol would pass this on to us. Carol is very conscientious. Also she went to the parochial school that was in the colony for a longer time than Paul did. That may have made a difference. In talking now I realize that Paul's identity was, is a [deleted his surname--his father's family]. That was what he grew up with more than being a Mennonite. When we moved to this house in the colony he was 14, I think. And the boys in the neighborhood would ask him, "Are you a Mennonite?" That seemed important to them and he had never thought about, that it was an important question to ask. He knew who *he* was. He was Paul [name deleted] and he lived at [name deleted] Dairy and his father took care of things there. That was his identity. But, I could see that that was sort of a strange time for him. And I think he never did claim it. I think the ethics and the lifestyle but not particularly the church.

IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU MAINTAINED THAT ASPECT THAT YOU TALKED ABOUT WITH YOU MOTHER; THAT YOU LET THEM MAKE THAT DECISION FOR THEMSELVES.

Yes, I did. I think it was important that that decision they make themselves. We're close to our children. Almost every day they call, and I'm careful not to call them because I don't want to do that! [laughs] But they do call--almost every day, somehow there's some touch with them.

AND THEY'RE STILL HERE.

Yes, they're here. Well, our daughter is involved in the family business.

DO YOU REMEMBER ANY MINOR CONTROVERSIES [DURING THEIR ADOLESCENCE], ANY QUESTIONS IN THEIR MINDS, CLASHES THAT WOULD CAST LIGHT ON HOW THEY CAME TO BE THE PEOPLE THEY ARE?

I don't remember a lot with Carol. She was always a strong-willed person and an independent person. But very responsible. I don't remember telling her to get in bed or be in by a certain time. For her last two years of high school she went to Harrisonburg. The Eastern Mennonite College--I think it's separate now; there was an Eastern Mennonite high school, it was an academy; and she went there because her friends did and she felt she could have a fuller social life there which I guess reflects the fact that she didn't quite feel a part of the local high schools. And probably her senior year, I recall that she wanted to spend a weekend with a friend in their home. And I think we realized that the boy's parents were going to be away or we were not sure they would be there. I can't recall what she told us. And I remember over the phone arguing with her, saying she couldn't and she was very, very persistent and I was not a match for that so Paul got on the phone and said, "Carol, No. And, no, we will not talk about it, you cannot, no question, you cannot." And she was just enraged but she was two hundred miles away so that was the end of it for us. But then her older cousin later told us that she was just so angry and [laughs] and everyone knew it! So that's one big confrontation with her I remember, there were a few with her.

With our sons, I don't remember confrontations so much as always reigning them in: You are, perhaps, too young to drive; You are driving too fast; You should get better grades. There was monitoring. I'm sure there were confrontations. You tend to forget. You do. It was not [pause] It is not a time I'd like to do over again. Because you are not their friend. You're not sure where you're parenting; you're trying to move away and let them make decisions but you really cannot quite. You know, did they ever threaten to leave home or run away? No. I'm sure they wanted to, but nothing of that magnitude. But, shouting? Yes! [Laughs] Hollering? Yes! And Paul saying, "That's the end, there will be no more discussing." Did I ever cry? Yes.

IT SOUNDS LIKE THE EASTERN MENNONITE COLLEGE AND HIGH SCHOOL HAVE BEEN A GREAT INFLUENCE ON THIS COMMUNITY.

They have been, yes.

DOES THAT DRAW PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY?

From the East, probably. Mostly from the East. There's a large Mennonite community in Harrisonburg, the Shenandoah Valley. So in high school there would be large group that would be day students and then they do have dormitories for boarding students. It's really an excellent school. It has high standards; good academic standard, good academic level. So, the kids have done well there. And if

they're not committed to that, they don't stay.

TO WHAT DEGREE DID RELIGIOUS SERVICES AND EDUCATION PLAY A ROLE IN HER EXPERIENCE THERE?

I think in high school they had a chapel service every morning. I think it was mandatory. It was when I went there, I graduated from there also as did my mother. For college it is not, and it was not daily. I think that at the high school there the kids are very aware of a set of rules imposed on them and it's not particularly their choice. So I think the choices are really made after that; I think they were with Carol.

WAS THERE MUCH RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN THE CURRICULUM?

Probably each year there was one bible class that you would take. I'm not sure if it's twice or once a year, a renewal movement; and a speaker comes in from someplace and holds series of talks, of meetings for probably a week. So there's a lot of effort put into that week. I'm sure there's more than that but I can't be specific.

IS IT PRETTY EXCLUSIVELY A MENNONITE STUDENT BODY?

The high school is more than the college. There are more from the local community, from other churches, that would come because it offers, probably, a better education and atmosphere than public high schools. The teachers have always been so dedicated; they're people who just love to teach and are there year after year after year. They have a strong music program, choral singing. It's a good school and I would hope that our granddaughter would also go there.

TELL ME A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR GRANDDAUGHTER.

She is eight. She is an excellent student. She's artistic. She's almost perfect! [Laughs] She is a very kind child. She's a bit shy and she can be moody. Her mother, we think, is a bit strict with her but because she is now a single mother I think she feels very responsible; she is the parent and cannot play around with this job. Meg's father has remarried and has another child so Meg now has a step-sister and that's good for her. Our daughter has done just a really good job of trying to connect Meg with her new family and to relate to her father [Meg's father] and I really have to give her so much credit because I'm not sure I could have handled it that well. It has not been easy but to me it's an example of how people should do; so I'm very proud of our daughter also in this. So after Carol's separation and divorce, things were difficult for Meg and yet at school--I'm a very good friend of Meg's teacher and she thinks Meg is just doing so well in the third grade; is the top in the reading class and enjoys math and is never bored because she can read so well,

she always has a book in tow. She's a bit overweight so she's conscious that when she's out on the field, she can't run as fast as the other children. So she's working on that. Did I tell you more than you wanted to know?

SHE'S ALSO AT THE MENNONITE DAY SCHOOL?

Yes.

HOW MANY GRADES ARE THERE?

There are five grades.

DOES THAT MEAN SHE WOULD HAVE TO GO TO PUBLIC SCHOOL AFTER THIS?

I think most of them do. Or she may go to the Baptist school which has, I guess, kindergarten through twelfth grade. So a number of them go there. It's a rather conservative school, a fundamentalist school and we call, I don't know if you're familiar with this term, but the Mennonites call this--are you Baptist?

NO. [LAUGHS]

Okay. Did I ask that the last time? [laughs] We call them "God and Country". So there would be that strong influence that you would weigh against many of the other influences that public school would have. But, I think that the kids that have gone from Warwick River Church School even to the public schools have had a good experience and do well. I think what Carol chooses for her will be all right. Then we try to say "So you will go to college at EMC, won't you?" And she says, "No, I'll go to JMU." [laughs] Because her grandfather is a professor there so she feels already I think . . .

AT EIGHT?

Yes! She says, "Some of the children in my grade say they don't want to go to college." [Smiles]

SHE'S VERY AWARE! I'M WONDERING HOW SOME OF THE BUSINESS AND COMMERCIAL ISSUES HAVE CHANGED OVER THE YEARS. HOW DO YOU THINK THE TWO WORLDS OF THE CHURCH AND BUSINESS COMMUNITY HAVE INTERACTED?

Well, I don't know. I think the larger businesses at this point are sort of removed from the accountability of the church. Before when the people went to market or you had the Colony Farms Dairy, or whatever you did, everyone knew

about your business because you probably had other church members working for you. And when that is no longer the case, the accountability is not there. There would be a pretty wide variation, I think, of how that's handled now. There are businesses that, by the way they are run, their statement would be: "Here we are, this business, and we want to do well but most of all we want to be faithful to what we believe." Then there are businesses, I think, in the community, that by the way they are set up and practice, say, "this is our business, and, to make money, this is what we must do. And no one else would understand." So there really is a wide variation. A business that Paul's family is involved in is an apartment complex. That has been a fairly open business because a lot of the staff are Mennonites. And so there has to be an accountability then, an awareness--it helps you be aware when you have that. If people are working for you but maybe are teaching you in sunday school class the next sunday . . .

JUST MORE CONTACT OUTSIDE OF WORK

Yes, yes. I think there are still in a lot of the businesses; people would not bring suit. But you find yourself needing to defend yourself in court if a suit is brought. But I think there were always differences. Paul's family had a large dairy . . . and it was first operated by Paul's father and uncle and then by Paul and his brother. When Paul's father and uncle operated it, they delivered milk on Sunday. Well, that was just a little beyond what the colony people would have done. So that was not approved of and then later was not done. There would be a wide range. There would be a lot of businesses--I make it sound as if there are many; there are not that many. But there are businesses that will say to their employees, "we want you to use your gifts, if you can help." There's a large plumbing and heating business. That business helped in putting in plumbing and heating in churches and schools, in the new Eastern Mennonite College place--just in many, many places. They make their men available to go on service calls for projects. Our church has--this is church-wide--Mennonite Disaster Service.

Third Interview

TELL ME ABOUT THE ROLE PACIFISM HAS PLAYED IN YOUR LIVES.

I think it really shaped my life and my thinking because there were always reminders that you were a people apart from the main stream. In the final decision, if a decision were made, your state or your country did not have the last word. That is a difference. When I was a child, it would have been noticed by me: during World War II, we didn't buy war bonds; we were good citizens, but we didn't fly the flag. But then it also gave our community and our church an international feel.

There were few in the Mennonite community who served in the army but there were some; my uncle did. And I remember when that choice was made, my grandmother said, "Oh, no, no, I think it can't be." So then instead of being proud

of this son who was going into the service at a time of really high patriotic level in our country and when everyone was really proud of this, it was probably the first one--no, I had another uncle who during a peace time did join the service for a short time. He was very unhappy, so my grandfather paid for his discharge from the army, I think or had to make some arrangements--he didn't fulfill his term. He met him at the train station, treated him like the prodigal son, took him to the stores on Washington Avenue, bought him a new suit of clothes. This was the prodigal son coming home, [laughs] after having gone astray. Then when a younger brother of my mother's did join the service during WWII I remember the concern, and my grandmother saying, "Oh, no, it can't be, I think it can't be." So, he was warmly received back into the family, he was not ostracized in any way. I do remember the question she asked him when he returned was, "Did you kill anyone?" That was important for her to know. And for her piece of mind, he told her, "No."

So we followed the Battle of the Bulge and the Rhein things, all of that, very closely. At the end of the war . . . then the homes were opened up in the colony. We rented to army officers--housing was just really scarce in the community--invited the people to church. They would come to church with us and hear sermons preached on pacifism and to my memory didn't seem offended. They may have been. I don't know how they could have been comfortable but they were there and looking back I find that rather remarkable. During WWII, across on the island there, there was a large military base and I my mother tells of the lonely soldiers rowing across to come to the colony church for revival meetings and it was just packed with these service men. So there was communication and good feeling, a sense of "this is what you're doing and we can accept that, although we have another stand and this is where we are; we could not do this. Perhaps some day you will be where we are, likely not, but nevertheless this is where we are." There was not, as I remember, any attempt to teach that these people were wrong, they should not be doing this. Rather, the emphasis was on, in our faith, the way we interpret it, this is what we see and we can see no other way, if that makes sense. It really does and it doesn't.

After the war, the Mennonite community was very busy raising money for the relief services in Europe. They sent care packages, corresponded with refugees. There was a portable meat-canner, I think it started in Kansas, and it would go from community to community. And it's still in operation, but it started 40 or 50 years ago--not the same one, they've improved it. This portable meat-canner would come and set up on a farm so it was set up on a farm in the colony and the farmers would donate meat and the community would get together and can and process this meat. And thousands and thousands of cans of beef, chicken and pork were sent to Europe with the relief services label. For the civilians. The people in Holland, and Germany and Austria, Belgium and France--those countries who had been occupied and who had lost the war. So we were very aware of this. Then there were a number of people from the community who went for a term of service with this relief organization for a year or two in Europe. We were very aware of that. Some stayed a long time. People knit baby booties for that, sent clothes--there was a big colony operation. You were very aware that you were doing this. You may not have

supported the war effort but this you could support. I was 13 or 14 at the time and that impressed me. I guess it was a little earlier than that.

WERE THERE ANY RUN-INS WITH CLASSMATES AT SCHOOL; QUESTIONS LIKE, "HOW CAN YOU NOT WANT TO FIGHT TO MAKE THE WORLD SAFE FOR DEMOCRACY OR NOT FIGHT THIS EVIL MAN?"

I don't recall that. I really do not. I know there were incidents in other Mennonite communities. People in other Mennonite communities sometimes had their cars painted yellow as a symbol of being cowardly, or maybe shouting at them as they drove or walked down the street. But I don't think anyone has any stories of that happening here.

THAT'S VERY INTERESTING CONSIDERING THAT THERE IS SUCH A MILITARY PRESENCE HERE? DO YOU THINK THAT HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH IT, PERHAPS?

I don't know. We have asked that ourselves.

IT'S INTERESTING THAT THE YOUNG SERVICEMEN SAW SPECIFICALLY THE MENNONITE CHURCH AS SORT OF A HAVEN.

They were invited [to church?] I think in World War II, which I remember; I don't remember this but my mother says that during the First World War, families would invite servicemen to dinner. I don't recall that. I do remember renting houses to them so there were a number living in the community. But I don't remember instances. But you were aware of this. When I went to high school I did not salute the flag, then you were different just because you did not do that. I don't remember anyone raising their eyebrows about that. It seemed it was accepted. It just seemed that that difference was accepted and respected. This pacifism throughout. . . you were always aware that you did not do things by force. You did not go to court; there would have been a cloud over this if you had gone to court and sued anyone. When I was in my teens I remember someone in the church was in a car accident and they were at fault. They were sued for probably $3,000. Anyway, a big sum in the 30s or 40s. So then the church went around the community and collected money to pay this suit so he would not have to lose his house or wouldn't have to suffer. Later I remember another man was sued and again people helped him pay the suit.

DO YOU THINK THE NOTION OF PACIFISM AFFECTED BEHAVIOR BEYOND RELATIONS WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD OR THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY? HOW DO YOU THINK IT HAS SHAPED THE "MENNONITE CHARACTER"?

Oh, I'm sure it did. We had the, I think we developed the personality, in relating to the larger community, of we are here but we are really not part of you

because [pause] You were limited in your business because you couldn't open yourself up to law suits. How do you collect unpaid bills, that sort of thing. Also, how competitive can you be? Humbleness was encouraged. A mild-mannered spirit was thought to be really virtuous--soft-spoken, gentle. I'm sure it did, I sure it did, yes.

WHAT ABOUT WITHIN THE MENNONITE COMMUNITY? WAS THAT AS OBVIOUS WHEN YOU WERE JUST SURROUNDED BY A GROUP OF YOUR FAMILY OR FRIENDS?

I think it was there. You were very careful about what your aspirations were. When I was growing up there were a number of young boys my age, the Bishop sort of tapped them on the shoulder and told them, "I think you would be good minister material," or "you could be a leader in the church." And they were encouraged to go to school for that. And with that encouragement, they would go. But if a young man said, "I want to be a preacher," and "I would like to be a preacher in this church," that was probably a good way to never get there. You would say, "*Who* does he think he is?" So you had to be more devious, I think, about how you got to where you wanted. Now you could say, "I want to be a doctor." Because it was assumed that if you wanted to be a doctor what you really wanted to do was serve mankind. So the service careers, that was respected and you could have said that. [If you would] like to be a teacher, or a doctor or a nurse... If you would have said, "I want to be a performer, I want to study opera," anything that brought a lot of attention to yourself, that would have been hard to do and you would not have gotten the support. An artist, no. It wasn't a good place for that.

HOW ABOUT A WRITER?

A writer that wrote curriculum for the church school, sunday school, bible school--that would have been wonderful. A writer of plays to probe really what was going on in the community--they probably would have had to write it from Kansas! [laughs] And some did that! So it depends on what you were writing. And anything that really calls attention to yourself, you would have to be a little cunning or clever or not quite up front--it was done. But the people who didn't do it in a skillful way, didn't get along as well as people who did.

WERE THERE ANY MENNONITE LAWYERS OR POLITICIANS?

No. That would have been frowned upon. How could you go to court? How could you do that? I have a niece now who is an attorney. I think she is the first one to have been born here in this Mennonite community and stayed. There were others who came in maybe, and at Marshall-Wythe, and maybe stayed for a time. I think she is the first. And she is probably 30. So it would not be my generation but the next generation, yes. It would be possible and encouraged and the church

community would be very proud of it now.

OH, YES?

Yes.

DO YOU THINK THAT SIGNALS A CHANGE IN BASIC PHILOSOPHY AT ALL?

I think it does. And also the Mennonite churches here in the last 25 years or so have become very diverse. Whereas probably 30 years ago there were very few people from non-Mennonite backgrounds who were part of the Mennonite churches. Now it is probably half of the people in the Mennonite churches. So, it is that accommodation, that made that possible.

DO YOU KNOW VERY WELL OR HAVE SOME RELATIVELY CLOSE FRIENDS WHO CAME INTO THE MENNONITE CHURCH?

Oh, yes, I have very close friends, yes.

HOW DO THEY VIEW THE CHURCH AND WHAT KIND OF IDENTITY HAVE THEY FORMED?

I think it varies. There is a couple that we're close to--our age--who were raised as Episcopalians, and say, "we were *good* Episcopalians." They also traveled a lot. He was with the Navy and then the National Weather Bureau so they traveled all over the world so there was probably a decade or two when they marginally associated with a church where ever they were for a short time. It didn't seem difficult for them, it seemed a freeing thing for them to have a less liturgical church, however a church with a history and a strong background and they very much looked for the sense of community because they had not had that in years. So the sense of community--that if you belong to this church, you have a family. So they feel. . . they say, "Yes, we are Mennonite." Now, when I grew up, I didn't know what Advent was and I had heard of Lent but it was . . . some other group. Now our church is aware of that. We don't do it right but we talk about Advent in the worship services and that sort of thing. We don't do it right. So some of these things we're hearing about . . . Maundy Thursday? The Thursday before Easter? And this our friends will say, "Why are we doing this? This is what we had!" You know. "Why don't we just--you did what you were doing so well." [laughs] So that would be where they were.

A couple that are the age of our children that have been Mennonites for probably ten years or more--Their background was Southern Baptist from Virginia, really Southern Baptist. I've heard him say, "I will never be a Mennonite or thought of as a Mennonite but my children will be." You know, if they choose, they will be.

So he thinks it's a rather long process. Then there are in our church . . . there is a woman from the Greek Orthodox church who very much likes to be part of the Mennonite community and at the same time has retained her identity; she does not pretend that her identity is that of an ethnic Mennonite. So she has done a good job of balancing the two worlds. Most people don't do it that well but she's single and does not have children so I think, probably, it's . . . the priest from the Greek Orthodox church here, she is best friends with the wife of the priest and sees them often and yet is just really tied into our group.

DID THEY SEEK YOU OUT? DID THEY JUST ARRIVE AT THE CHURCH ONE SUNDAY MORNING?

This sequence--there was a woman who was going through a really difficult divorce, and more than that, just a really difficult time. She was from a Southern Baptist church and was being counseled by a clinical psychologist who is a member of our church. She felt she couldn't relate to her church, she had to find another church because her husband was there and active. So her therapist then suggested, well maybe for a time, come to his church and it could be a temporary thing and then decide what you want to do. So she came and never left, she joined. She is a special ed. teacher and on weekends was in a pool that did respite care, caring for these special children if their parents wanted to go away for the weekend. So she took care of a young adult [who was the child of] the couple who were Episcopalians and invited them to church. And when they came the first time I remember thinking, "Oh, I like them. I hope they come back." And she said, "They're church-hoppers, they won't be back." Or church-shoppers, I don't remember what she said. But they did, they came back and they've been there ever since. Then, the girl form the Greek Orthodox church--it was either from the Appalachian Trail hike that she was part of, or some bird-watching thing, something like that where she met them. So they invited her. So it was just a chain, these invitations. No, we didn't go hand out brochures or tracts or call on the phone. We're not very good at that.

I'M GETTING THE IMPRESSION THAT THERE ISN'T AN EVANGELICAL THRUST TO THE SERVICE AROUND THE WORLD OR LOCALLY.

Do you mean, is there an invitation given at the end of the service like the Baptists look for? We don't have that, no. The ministers I think if you talked to them, would say we are an evangelical church, doctrinally, we are evangelical and rather conservative. Socially we are liberal. And so we really have trouble fitting into the mainstream of [laughs] of anything.

IT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE THERE'S A MISSION FELT TO SAVE INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE NOT IN THE CHURCH.

There would be that. But there would also be the concern that it would be

a mission of the whole person and not just that person's spiritual life but to minister to that person's social . . . the need of the whole person would be emphasized rather than saving someone then counting that and not knowing what happened to them. The mission would be, they would call it church planting. A new church has not started for 10 or 20 years. The last one was in Williamsburg. There would be some sense of what is the mission in this community. In Williamsburg church, one thing that church did was work with the social services of James City County and offer respite care to mothers who had been identified as perhaps having a possible child-abusive situation. And so the church tried to be close to that situation and I think once a week--I don't know how often--provided respite care for children, giving the mothers a day off, and giving the children lunch. That was a mission of that church. There were homes in the area, then, that were involved in foster care, leading to adoption of some children that they could not give up!

I think then in that church there was some thought of what group will we focus on and made the group open to both the Mennonite students who would be in the area from William and Mary and also students there. So they have that interest also. So apart from the nucleus of Mennonite families that moved there perhaps 20 years ago--15, it's not been 20--there are building contractors and that's always been something that the Mennonites are fairly good at. In addition to that there is an English professor from William and Mary who is now a member. There is a couple who were refugees from Eastern Europe after one of the incidents there. There is a balladeer, a woman who sings in the taverns in Colonial Williamsburg. I think her husband is an architect. They're members--in Williamsburg, the Norge area.

THAT'S INTERESTING THAT YOU'RE AWARE OF WHAT'S GOING ON UP THERE? DO YOU VISIT THERE?

There is an effort to try to keep the churches aware of each other and this is what we call the larger family. The congregation is the congregational family and then there is the larger, extended family. But I have a niece and her family are part of that church and our sister and brother-in-law, he was pastor of that church when it started, so he's sort of . . . So I think we would have an awareness of who's there, try to know who the people are.

TELL ME WHAT A MENNONITE CHURCH SERVICE IS LIKE TODAY, AS OPPOSED TO WHAT IT WAS LIKE WHEN YOU WERE GROWING UP.

First I'll tell you what it was like when I was growing up. It was a white frame church which is no longer there. It probably seated 250 people, at the most 300. When I was growing up, the men were seated on one side and the women on the other. There was no nursery care; the babies sat with the mothers and if there were many children, the father and mother divided up these children. We did not sit together as families. Also, the church was in a t-shape and in the t's with benches that were parallel with the pulpit, were called the women's amen corner and the

men's amen corner. And I never remember anyone saying, "amen." Because that was not done. The services were more reserved than that. However, that is what we named them. Just in front of those amen corners were little rooms called anterooms where if someone really was not well they could sit or a mother could sit with a child. I'm not sure what the men did; I guess they could sit with a child too. But the main body was the women and the men.

The service started with two or three ordained men and the bishop sitting on a bench up in the pulpit. And the ministry was not supported financially; they were lay people. The Bishop had an orchard by which to support himself. And the ministers, whatever, it was marginal time. When I was growing up, there were probably three ministers, the Bishop and two deacons. And the women did not get in the pulpit. Unless possibly one was a returned missionary and had a frail voice and everyone wanted to see her and she was going back anyway so there was no danger of a woman keeping that position up there. And that wasn't said but this is from my perspective at this point. [laughs] So I do remember occasionally there would be a woman who would ascend those stairs and speak from the pulpit.

The singing was in four-part and it was really good. And the chorister would announce the number as he rose from his seat in the audience and again as he got up the front and turned around. So there were two announcements of the hymn. Then he would either take a tuning fork or a pitch pipe. The tuning fork was softer; he would hold it to his ear--or her ear, the women were also choristers. And always beating the time and singing. Everyone could read music except a few people and you always knew who the men were who did indeed sing soprano, who had never managed to learn to sing tenor or bass [they would sing the melody rather than the harmony written for the male voices]. I don't remember any monotones. I do not remember anyone who couldn't carry a tune. Surely there must have been someone and yet I'm not sure--I think I would have known that. So you looked forward to that--several hymns.

One of the ministers then would read a passage of scripture, make comments on that and then we knelt for prayer. That was a semi-noisy sound because we didn't kneel forward as the Catholics or Episcopalians. There were no kneeling pads on the benches and they were not pews, they were called benches and they were slatted benches. We would kneel with our face toward the back of the pew. And the prayers were rather long. I remember as a child once I think the opening was rather long then we kneeled and the prayer was rather long and I expected that the service was over and stood up and, to my dismay, the congregation sat down and I realized we had only begun. There were several *more* songs and a rather long sermon and then probably another song and another kneeling after the sermon then, perhaps, a song as you sat down again--you were generally seated to sing--and the benediction. And you filed out. It was not a formal filing out, however, because immediately after the benediction there was visiting; and you visited and visited and visited. And if it was the summer or spring or fall you visited outside in your own little age group with these circles. So no one just filed out of church and got in their car and drove away. You would have thought that person was unfriendly or odd or not feeling well.

Nor did the ministers walk down the aisle afterward to greet the people at the front door. You greeted each other; that was not needed. That was the mission of everyone. In the Mennonite or Anabaptist Church there was the philosophy that everyone is a minister; it's called the "priesthood of all believers." There was also the philosophy that--and there were differing opinions on this--but the church is not sacred; wherever the people meet is church. So the church is called the "church-house" not the church. [phone rang] The church was the people; the congregation was the church. The building was the church house. Some people still call it, in other places, the "meeting house."

IN HEARING YOU SAY THAT, I WONDER IF YOU THINK THERE IS ANY SIMILARITY TO THE QUAKERS.

I don't know that much about Quakers. I know their history but I've not been in a Quaker service and I wish I had been; I still should do that. I don't know. Probably. Although it was always planned. The minister knew what his text would be. Everyone knew who would preach, who would read the scripture. There were announcements. So it was a planned service. It had its own liturgy. It really did. In fact, then, after the sermon there was opportunity for people then to comment on it; it was not done, but if someone really didn't agree with what was said, they could say that. I never remember a *woman* saying that but every once in a while someone would. So there was that openness also; anyone in the congregation could have commented--it was not closed.

WHAT KINDS OF THINGS MIGHT THEY COMMENT ON?

This could have been in a sermon and if it had been in a sermon it might be something someone disagreed with. In the evening services there were topics that were given and assigned several weeks before on some subject. And then at the end there was time for discussion and if you gave the topic, one of the fears was that you may have said something that some older brother--who *really* knew--would comment on. There was a certain fear of being doctrinally wrong, even when you didn't know what the doctrine was, when you were 13 or 14 or 15. But we would stand up with these prepared papers and read them, having studied and written. So this was done in a way to bring . . . it started with the kindergarten age with learning a bible verse to say up front. And this was to give you presence on the floor, participation in the body of the church, a belonging. So this was sunday night. Then after that there was a discussion: what comments do you have? It was open. So there was an openness, and Sunday morning also, although not as much. And then there were particularly several men who were identified as feeling--when the church was changing, they would protest this.

SO HOW DID IT CHANGE?

It started changing probably in the mid '50s. It really started changing, I think, when some of the farmers were selling their farms, people were moving into the colony, people had new neighbors; it was accepted that people would go to college and they didn't have to say they wanted to be a teacher or a doctor. You could go for enrichment, for an education. Then the dress started changing. So in the next 15 or 20 years--it happened in one generation--the farms were gone. People no longer had long hair. You didn't need to wear the covering to church; it was your choice. Well, the long hair--people still had long hair but it was a choice, before it was not a choice. So there were many choices, many choices.

IT HAPPENED IMPERCEPTIBLY?

There were concerns. There were studies by the larger Mennonite church here because this was a tight geographical area where the change was happening very fast. So there were studies here by the larger Mennonite church of interested groups on: what was happening, what would happen? So it was an interesting area for sociologists, particularly, to study. And someone came and stayed I think three months here. They had studied an old order Mennonite community in the Shenandoah Valley and then studied this because of the changes here. So it was recognized as a community with fast change. There were no divisions. There were people who did move, I think, who wanted a more traditional, secure community. The young families who still wanted to farm moved to an area in Powhatan and Amelia Counties about an hour west of Richmond. So there is a rather large church there that started from this community. Some of the farms were sold here and they would buy a farm there.

So the people who were here were people who, either because of families, didn't [mind the?] change; people who enjoyed the change; people who were challenged with the . . . challenge! People who moved in because of the job opportunities here. Today one of the--you didn't ask about this but earlier you asked about pacifism--the issue that has been talked about in this community in the last year is criteria for church membership. The bishop here along with a study group (when we study an issue here they're called study groups) so this was a study group that wrote to a number of theologians in the Mennonite church and missionologists, they call them I think, and educators and some of the church fathers, about church membership. Should people in the military--in what way should they participate in the church life? And should they be accepted as members? How can we--what accommodations should be made if any? At our church, for instance, we have at least three families with the men working on or stationed at three different aircraft carriers.

So that has been the issue. Because that issue was discussed at conference and then at a state-wide conference and at a North-American conference held in Oregon this year, this has gotten a lot of attention in the church papers and it's talked about as the "Tidewater situation." So again a lot of interest in the larger Mennonite Church of North America is focused on this really very small community.

The paper then that was accepted by the churches, and there were reservations about it, [it said] that people serving in the military could be accepted as church members but it was qualified; they should be in the process of seeking to get out of that position and they should be open to the teaching, that sort of thing. So at this point there are people who question whether that should have been done--and I am one. And there are people who think, if you are a Christian church, how can you deny membership to anyone? Then there are people who think that this is the sunset of the pacifism of the Mennonite church in this area.

And you asked about the church service and how would it differ. That is another, probably, issue but more of an under-current on the different practices of worship. There are people who consider the service I just described to you as so traditional that it would no longer attract and keep young people. Incidentally, I may have mentioned, that there were no musical instruments used or allowed in church. Now there are organs and pianos and guitars and flutes and, if anyone can play it well, a trumpet! [laughs] So there's often instrumental music and I don't know that anyone would object to that. I don't think there would be any objection at all. There is four-part singing and there are people who hang on to that and hope it will never die because you could collect a group of 50 people who had grown up in this Mennonite community and hand them a song they had never sung before, blow a pitch pipe and they could sing it. I think that's special. But there are people who say let's don't try to hold on to that, that doesn't attract anyone, you know. If we want to grow in our church we need the new methods of worshiping.

## IS GROWTH THE PRIORITY OR SURVIVAL?

[pause] I think it would be a priority. I think it is also a survival because the families are now small. There are a few families who may have 3 children, most families have 2 children, some families have one; some families have none. Families in my mother's day, were probably [6-child] families, 6 to maybe 9, I'm not sure, I think there were nine. And in my age group, there were families who had 4 children and a family of four was really considered a very, very nice family. If someone had 5, it was probably one more than they really wanted! [laughs] And there were some with two, of course, and some with one and some with none. But the size of the families was really much smaller. And it is, I think, probably it is survival--with integrity. We do open the doors to people who would like to be there. We do have someone, he is a theologian, not a Mennonite, but he's very popular in Mennonite circles. And what he is saying is don't--you have had this history of over 400 years and somehow people now in this decade are looking at it and saying, "Hey, that makes sense. That looks good," and don't be walking the other way, don't be walking in the other direction while these people are walking toward your understanding of faith. And I think there's some validity in that statement.

## WHAT ABOUT MARRIAGE OUTSIDE THE MENNONITE CHURCH?

Yes, when I was growing up, if someone married outside the Mennonite church, they were already moving away from the Mennonite church. And so they were called "lost" to the Mennonite church. It didn't mean lost but this was this church's loss. But now there have been a lot of marriages with someone of another faith or another church. And interestingly, I think most of them have come to the Mennonite church. Some I can think of have not; most of them have.

DID IT MATTER WHETHER THE MEMBER WAS A MALE OR FEMALE?

[pause] No. I don't think so. Well, perhaps. That's an interesting question.

[end of interview]

# APPENDIX C: KATE

WHY DON'T WE START BY TALKING ABOUT WHO YOUR GRANDPARENTS WERE AND WHERE THEY CAME FROM.

On both sides?

YES.

I'll start with my mother. My mother was born in Ohio and her parents were [deleted to preserve anonymity]. They lived in Elida, Ohio. My [maternal] grandfather was not of a Mennonite group but my Grandmother [was from a Mennonite family and her maiden name] is a very well-known Mennonite name to people in this community and others. And her father had been a Mennonite minister. And her mother had died when she was little and as she grew older she felt kind of, I don't know, she must have been rebellious or something for a little while and she went her own way. Although she wasn't extremely so. She married [her grandfather] who was I believe it was some kind of Brethren group that they belonged to, and they did not go to church and were not part of the Mennonite community, except just in the community itself, I mean, they were part of the community. When they were in their 50s they returned to the Mennonite church and my mother and her brothers and sisters were raised in the Mennonite church, especially as they became older and sort of chose--at the time, it seemed as though the church was trying to become more different from its neighbors and emphasize some of the differences, such as in clothing, and they sort of bought into that. Those were my maternal grandparents. They moved to this area in probably the '40s. They moved down here because of family who had moved here. From that time, from the time they moved down here in the '40s, they lived as part of my family. They were either in a duplex house or a little house next to my parent's house. So my maternal grandparents were very much a part of my growing up. And from the time I was little, I never knew not having them live with us or beside us. So they were a very big influence in my life and on all their grandchildren and children. They died in the early '60s when I was in college.

Now, my paternal grandparents. My grandfather, who wrote this book [indicates hard-bound book of her grandfather's memoirs], moved here when he was a late teenager--he was maybe 18 or 20--with his parents. His father was a poet, which was very unusual for Mennonites in those days because they were very

practical, farming people. He moved to this community partly for his health. He had not been in good health. The community at that time in the early 1900s or late 1890s had been advertised in church newspapers as a place where people could get cheap land and the climate was good and that because these old plantations here after the Civil War had been abandoned and were worn out or hadn't been well-managed and just kind of going to waste, there were these large tracks of land that weren't being farmed and were for sale. That's how this whole community where we're sitting now--it was kind of isolated. There was not a bridge there at Lucas Creek--if you came over the bridge to my house--there wasn't a bridge there. There was just a little dirt road going out someplace else. It was basically just abandoned land.

So a group of men came and bought a large portion and then people bought from them. Nearly everybody, you know, the farms that they bought were all of this group--or people who responded to the publicity about it: "Come down here and help start a church and start a community in the South where the climate is more temperate." Because most of these people were, as my grandfather was, they were either from Ohio also western Ohio and Indiana. So my grandfather came as a teenager, one of the oldest in his family, and his parents bought land. My grandfather at that point, he wanted to go to William & Mary but when he went to look into it, it was at a very low point right then--this was at the turn of the century--and it was not a very good school, it really wasn't. He didn't think it was good enough [laughs] so he didn't go there. He ended up then becoming a teacher and a farmer and starting a dairy business. He married [her grandmother--her maiden name is recognizably German Mennonite] Her parents had come down from Longreen, Maryland by steamer, some kind of boat; they put all of their goods on the Baltimore ship, boat--whatever they called it--and came down overnight.

At that time people really used the waterways a lot here. My grandfather when he was a young man got the first motorized sailing vessel in the area and he would take cord wood from down here at the end of Colony Road on the Warwick River and take it around to Hampton. People did a lot of water travel; the little shops and things were down at the river and people would pull up in their boats and that was kind of the culture. So he married [her grandmother] who was the daughter of [great-grandmother also had a German surname] and [great-grandfather whose name, as mentioned above, is German Mennonite].

HOW ABOUT YOUR PARENTS?

My father was [his surname is common among Mennonites and well-known in this community]. When he was 3 years old, he can remember this house starting to be built. My grandfather bought this farm, I think it was a couple hundred acres from Lucas Creek. My father can remember "fishing" in the basement with a fishing pole, in the water that was collecting where they were digging out the basement. That was the grandfather who lived to be 99, almost a hundred years old, and had a dairy business. It was a [name deleted] Dairy. He had a big barn down the way there and milk cows and he also started a Dairy cooperative, bottling plant which would be over on Colony Road. He was active on the Warwick County School Board and in other educational [ ? ] and he helped get the first telephone lines into the area and things like that.

But my father was one of ten children and they are now from maybe late 60s to mid '80s and only one out of the ten have died so they were a healthy bunch. He went to Morrison High School which is now Warwick High School and was on the football team and was kind of a ladies' man and he was voted the biggest flirt in his high school class [laughs] and he grew up in this community when people were very close and a good times were had by all. I mean, the young people would do things together. It was just one of those communities where you had literary societies and things, kind of like what you read about in Little House on the Prairie, that sort of thing. They had a *lot* of fun. He went to William & Mary for a little while and also to the University of Maryland, specializing in Diary Sciences. He also established a dairy. He met my mother by seeing her high school graduation picture at the home of a relative who happened to be her relative in another direction. His uncle had married her aunt. They didn't know each other but my mother had sent her graduation picture to her aunt and my Dad saw that picture and thought she was a very pretty woman--and she was. That was how they met. Eventually, I think she came down here for a visit, eventually, then they married.

My mother is [name deleted] and she grew up in Ohio in a family of 8 where two little twin girls had died. She was never very strong. She was the kind of person who would stay out of school a lot. But she was very bright and she was very sort of shy and retiring at the same time. She just really didn't like the public eye very much at all. She was very smart and wanted to go to college but when she started she just didn't feel she could do it and dropped out. She had been valedictorian of her class or, rather, she would have been valedictorian but since the doctor in town, his daughter didn't get valedictorian, they didn't have one that year! [laughs] That's the story she told me, they didn't have a valedictorian that year because the girl they had expected, that the influential people wanted to have it, hadn't quite made it. So

that was kind of interesting. So they met and married and lived just a mile from here, bought some land and had a little house that they added to as their children came along. They had seven children. So I'm the middle child of six girls and one boy. They were married in '37 or '36, I think '36, and then my oldest sister was born in '37 and every couple of years after that for 15 years they had another baby.

WHAT IS YOUR EARLIEST MEMORY OF YOUR . . . FARMHOUSE?

It wasn't actually a farmhouse because it was just a little small two-story house. My Dad, his dairy was not at home, it was a place of business, he did not have cows or anything. Although his father had cows at his dairy. My father had a processing plant so he was really a businessman rather than a farmer. The earliest memory I have, I must have been extremely young because I was wearing diapers and my mother trained her children really early! [laughs] Now, if you really want my first memory, this is it. I remember waking up in my crib and being wet and I remember holding the bars, shaking the bars of the bed and screaming, no words, just Aaaaa! And then I remember my mother coming up the stairs and picking me up and taking me down stairs, setting me in the sink to give me a bath. So I must have been pretty young. [laughs] And I remember getting a tricycle for my fourth birthday. And I remember having Peter Rabbit read to me. Just lots of memories. I remember when my younger sister was born, I was four years old and I remember people saying, "Now, you're not the baby anymore." It wasn't *my* parents who said it, you know, relatives. "You're not the baby anymore." I didn't like that too much! [laughs]

I had a whole lot of fun with my brother and sisters when I was little. I had two older sisters and a brother and then the three--to me, it was like the big girls, the little girls and I was the in-between. I wasn't ever quite sure which side I fit into, which group. I didn't quite fit into either group because there were the two older girls and then my brother and then me and then the three younger girls were close together and they were more of a homogeneous group. My big sisters would organize us into things like a writing society, a club, that we would sit around the table . . . my one sister, who's still in journalism today, she would make up little news sheets about the club and little cartoons and mottos like, "We Write and Fight." Things like that. As children and as a family we kept . . . we live back a long lane and we didn't play with neighbors because there really weren't that many neighbors close to us so we really were our own best friends, my brother and sisters were. In fact, I think, when my younger sisters were coming along, they were so close that my

mother worried that she wasn't making sure that they played with other kids as much as they should. But she didn't need to worry about them; they did fine when they grew up. It was just that they preferred their own company, the way that they played with their paper dolls, they had their systems and their made-up play where, you know, you would create a whole imaginary situation and you would play. And if someone came over to visit you that didn't know this, you know, they didn't know how to play. And they wouldn't do things right so you didn't want to try! [laughs]

Cousins were very important too. I had first cousins on my Dad's side and my Mother's side that were in the area. And every Sunday afternoon was sort of cousins time. You were visiting relatives and they were visiting you and you would take long walks across the fields and make fudge and make popcorn balls and read books out loud to each other, things like that. That's one of the real good memories I have of relatives. My cousins were almost like sisters to me. I feel like my early memories were really positive ones. My grandparents lived next door. My Grandfather was very, very loving--a quiet, loving person who would always have treats for us and maybe [he'd be] sitting out there pealing an apple and cutting it and giving us slices or had his Dentyne chewing gum in his pocket and he'd give you a piece, that kind of thing. My Grandmother was more of an authoritarian type person who didn't want your sleeves to be too short. She had certain things that she wanted to make sure that you were the proper Mennonite girl you should be. You knew there were certain standards that she felt should not be transgressed so you were cautious around her because she had a sharp tongue and you didn't want to risk being told something you didn't want to hear.

TELL ME MORE ABOUT THE ISSUE OF DRESS.

Yes, that was a very big issue at the time that I was little. There was a very strong leader in the community before my time. His name was George R. Brunk. And I can just still remember my grandmother saying, "If George R. Brunk were alive, this would not be tolerated!" [laughs] That sort of remark. He had sort of gathered people together and made uniform standards like, you don't wear short sleeves. You wear long sleeves, even in the summer. What they called modesty, simplicity and it was also uniformity. It was supposed to be a witness to the world. You dress a certain way, then people will know that you're a Christian. This was how it came across to us but as I look back on it, I see it as a way of preserving community and keeping a group unchanged or attempting to keep a group unchanged.

When I look back, my father couldn't have cared less what we wore. You could have come out in a feed bag and he wouldn't have blinked an eye, or overalls--Oh, I wanted so badly when I was little to wear pants and a couple of times my mother would let me wear my brother's jeans or overalls or whatever he had, and I was just, OH, that was just my dream. She was just, you know, you're supposed to wear girls' clothes. And of course in that day and age, even outside the Mennonite community, girls didn't wear pants to school in high school. Nobody did and you wouldn't have been allowed to. We weren't in a way that far off from our culture but still different.

In our home, my father couldn't have cared less what we wore but my mother, I think, was under my grandmother's domination. My grandmother who had left the Mennonite community and then sort of came back to it--it was like: "Okay, we made this choice so now we're going to do it the way you're supposed to." So she would sew dresses for us. She was a great sewer; she made them the way she thought they should be made and I would just long for, say, a little bit of lace. That would be too worldly. Or, I wanted so badly to wear a blouse that was different from the skirt; and my mother would now and then order something out of the catalog in a weak moment and we'd come: "Oh, what can I wear?" And I think she would feel, "Oh, no. This is probably . . . " and she'd hide it or something. I remember this green, this plaid thing she sent off for. It was a circular skirt, I forget what the blouse was like, whether the same color or not. And it had a reversible vest, you could wear the green side or the plaid side. Oh, I just loved it! It was so cute. She must have decided that after all she had overstepped the bounds, it was just a little too cute! [laughs] And it kept disappearing! [LAUGHS] Oh, and it would be so embarrassing to think that I had to wear clothes that were kind of out-of-style and just looked like something maybe an old lady would wear. And even when I went to--it wasn't so bad when I was going to the little school here. There was a Christian day school that most of the Mennonite kids went to and some other kids went to it too but there pretty well everyone was kind of the same; although most of my friends' mothers were not that strict.

It was more--I felt like I was in one of the stricter families, very much so. You had to watch your sleeve length. At that time, there was a change coming. The generation before, the women had to wear dresses that they sewed themselves and there was kind of a cape affair that went with it. It was like a double--for modesty--that kind of came over and attached to a belt. The women until just before my age had been wearing these and so it was kind of changing. I was bound and determined I was not going to! [laughs] And my mother did and my grandmother did. I kept

saying, "There's no reason to have to do that. Why can't you just buy a normal shirtwaist dress or something that's just got long sleeves?" I never did and neither did my sisters; we did hold out for that. Another thing: when we were little you were not supposed to cut your hair. Your hair was supposed to be long and pinned up. You were also meant to wear a head covering. Some people would wear it just in church but some people thought you should wear it all the time, whenever you prayed and all this. So there was a big deal about having your head covered. So those were the main things. If you were a baptized member of the church, you were supposed to wear this head covering, it was a little net thing. Even when I was like 12, 13, 14, all the girls in the community got together and said, "Well, do we have to wear this thing to school?" Some of the parents, mothers basically--well, some of the girls' fathers (now, again, my father didn't care; whatever we did was fine with him; he wasn't critical one way or the other. That's the way he's been all his life) some of them said, "Well, what are the people in the other community going to think if some do and some don't? We need to be consistent." And this was one of the words: consistency. So I remember getting together with some of the other girls and some of their parents said, yes you should wear it to school. And so we went ahead and decided to wear it school. I remember what we did was--I don't know why, you just figure out ways to cope--I remember wearing this to school, I guess I wore my braids (I wore long braids) and I had them sort of tucked up like this and I wore my little white cap, until third period when I had P.E. and I would take it off to play whatever. Then I just never put it back on again! [laughs] I don't know what--I guess I was satisfying the need to do what the other girls were doing but also, like, "I'm not going to put that back on." [laughs] At that point, it wasn't even that I disagreed with even wearing it. I didn't really question it that much, I mean, I kind of wished we didn't have to but our church and community was so close and important to me, that it was accepted because other people were doing it too.

Then, as I got farther into high school, by the time I was 16, I was basically buying my own clothes and my mother just finally had to start accepting what we wore. From that time on there was really no difference. It was up until I was about 15 and from that point on it was more--and it was getting more accepted that you wore what you wanted to and it was not . . . I think by that time the distinctive dress was pretty much going out. But other things that the church did not approve of, like going to the movies or dances and things like that, I didn't really buck against that as a child. But I figured when I went away--I was 16 when I left home to go to college--at that point you just decided that you would do what you wanted to do and there was no big scene about it. It was change that was coming on everywhere I

think in the community.

TELL ME ABOUT THE MENNONITE CHURCH SCHOOL.

Okay, in the mid 40s, a woman came into this community, her name was Eve Carper and she had been a writer and a teacher in Pennsylvania. She had been writing for newspapers and magazines. She was a Mennonite woman. She dressed plainly, she even wore black stockings and everything but she was a very independent thinker, a very educated woman in the arts and sciences and a very, very good teacher. So they asked Mrs. Carper to start the school and they gave her the church basement to work with. [laughs] So, she had this little basement school room, a couple of rooms, and she set up this school. I think my older sister was one of the first in it. By the time I was in school, they had built a school building. If you go about a half a mile up Lucas Creek Road, up where Warwick River Church is, right beside it--continuing on today--is Warwick River Christian School. Today there's maybe 8% Mennonite kids in it. It's just a nice private elementary school, Christian day school. But at that time it was *wonderful*. It was a wonderful little school. I looked forward so much to going there and I was five when I started. The teacher, she just had a way--and she had four grades in one classroom--and she just kept everybody busy and in line. I remember she would put on the "Grand Canyon Suite" and we would put our heads down and listen to the mules clomping and she would read wonderful books to us, you know, great literature. She would have us memorize poetry and biblical passages and we would do plays. It was just kind of the ideal little school. It was where all your friends were and they even had hot lunches by way of the mothers. They had kind of a co-op. During the winter months, each mother would maybe cook two times for however many children she had in there. You would come in two days in the winter and cook for all the kids and then your child had hot lunches the rest of the year because then other mothers would come in the other days. It was kind of a rotation. So you had the parents right there being involved because, you know, most of the mothers didn't work in those days and they could come. We had wonderful, home-cooked, hot lunches. School was a lot of fun for me. It was a place I would never have wanted to miss. Well, I'm sure I liked staying home for a change every now and then. It was just the center of all the fun and the activity and I was pretty successful in school so it was a place where I looked forward to going.

I'm sure that school was a very big influence in creating community too. And that woman, when I look back to in the 40s, she was given a awful lot of free reign

to do, with a lot of respect from a community which was otherwise pretty male-oriented. People listened when Mrs. Carper spoke, even the men! [laughs] She just was a very authoritative person. She just died last year. She was in her 90s and working with children up until almost the very end. Not--she moved away from here--but she was in a nursing home. What else might you want to know about the school? The transition from the private school, the church community school, to the big public school was a big step. I went through 8th grade at the school; other years they only had it through 6th grade and now it goes through 5th grade but that year they had some good teachers and plenty of students and they went all the way through 8th grade.

So I was in 9th grade when I hit public school. I went to a brand new junior high school, it was called Warwick Junior High School and now it's Furguson High School. That was when my friends and I got together and tried to present sort of a united front so that people would not ask us too many dumb questions. The embarrassing thing was, you know, when someone would ask us things that . . . I remember somebody asking this: "Do they lock the doors of the Colony at night?" [laughs] And we were like, "Oh, no! they think we're some kind of weird group or something!" I remember someone asking me at P.E. when we were changing, "Are Mennonites allowed to wear slips?" And I thought, "Yes. How 'bout another stupid question?" [laughs] I guess it didn't seem any more stupid to them than, for example, our gym suites. We were not supposed to wear shorts so my mother sewed this little short skirt around the gym suite which she thought was fine and I thought looked dopey! [laughs] So my other friends would ask, "Why does your gym suite look like that?" And you would just cringe, "Because, you know, we can't wear shorts and these are like shorts." You just kind of took refuge in the fact that this was your church group and this is the way you were. But I also remember feeling very much that in some ways it was an asset because by being, feeling a little bit a fringe person, it also helped you understand other fringe people, people who were not the main group of popular kids. I think it always--in fact, I read [wrote?] an article about this, how this may have helped my teaching to know how it felt to be different and not to feel like you were the typical mainstream American kid who had no worries or feeling like maybe you're from a different ethnic group as you could feel even at that time. You know, that was an issue.

Sometimes it was a disadvantage in that we had the reputation of being honest, people to be relied on. The P.E. teachers loved us because we were usually good in athletics because, I don't know why, at least she had the stereotype that we would be. [laughs] I guess she figured we were all hardy farm girls even though we

weren't [laughs] necessarily from farms! Probably the P.E. teachers liked us because we were honest about whether we had washed our gym suites and things like that--the little picky details that gym teachers will watch for. We had a principal one time who I think did not do a good thing. It was against the rules to smoke on the bus and he called a couple of us in and said, "I want you to get the names of the kids on the bus who are smoking." I thought that, you know when I look back, I think that was really rotten of that principal because that puts you in that very compromised position. When he called in all those kids who were smoking they all were really angry at us, even though nobody said you did it--it wasn't even I who did it, it was another Mennonite boy who went ahead and told the principal since he had asked him to. And none of us pointed the finger and said it was Charles, we just let them think it was us. Even the bus driver was angry with us because she smoked too and wasn't supposed to! [laughs] It was a nightmare. I remember just feeling *horrible* about it. One girl actually spit at us, I remember, when we walked along. That was one of those impossible situations. You couldn't tell the principal, "no" very well and we weren't that developed in our consciences to be able to say, "I don't feel right about doing that." But eventually then, I think, they all became our friends again and it was no problem but it had been a problem at the time because you're supposed to be the goody-goody, I guess. But I made a big effort to, after that first year (ninth grade had to be just all adjustment, basically, and figuring out what the rest of the world was like) and in 10th grade I went to Warwick High School. I made a lot of friends and people kind of pulled me into activities and even though we weren't allowed to go to dances and things like that, I took part in the creative writing magazine, advanced composition classes, latin club, just extra cultural things that I got to do that were a lot of fun--Quill and Scroll society and all. Even those things were difficult, more from logistics than anything else. My Dad worked late hours and his business was in Hampton and my mother never drove when I was a teenager, she had small children and was not a go-places person. So, if I wanted to stay after school and do something, she didn't really mind if I did but she had no way to pick me up and she didn't encourage things. I can remember teachers driving me home from Warwick High School which is eight miles away and going way out of their way to take me home. I can remember waiting for my Dad for hours or things that, just the way our lifestyle was, made it difficult to really feel easily involved in the school.

I remember one year my P.E. teacher asked if I would take part in a track meet with everybody because I had done so well on the standing broad jump and the 50 yard dash and, oh, I wanted to so badly. But--two things--one, I knew my mother

would not want me to wear shorts and I was not going to do it in a dress! [Laughs] The second thing was, I wasn't sure I could get where I needed to be at the right time. I didn't even ask my parents, I remember, I just told my P.E. teacher, "I won't be able to." I look back on that and feel a little regretful that I couldn't--didn't feel comfortable to do some of those things. It wasn't on my Dad's part because he had been on the football team at Warwick High School and this was something he would have enjoyed me doing but he was just tied up in business. He couldn't have picked me up after school very easily. He would not get home until 7, 6 or 7 in the evening. On the other hand, maybe if I had made a fuss and said, "I want to do this,"--he was one to let me have my way. [laughs]

Again, I felt somewhat on the fringes but I felt like I had a pretty good time in high school. Eventually, I sort of made my niche and gained a lot of friends that I still keep in touch with even though they're in Texas or wherever else. Nobody's around here anymore.

HOW MANY OF YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY DID STAY IN THIS AREA?

None, basically. Of the Mennonite girls in my closest group of six girlfriends, none are here today. In the eighth-grade class from Warwick River Christian School there are two boys in this area and one of them goes to the Warwick River Mennonite church today but that's the only one. None of the girls are in this area. In my own family, there were seven, none of my brothers and sisters are in this area. They're all scattered. There's only one who attends a Mennonite church today. So it's not been able to keep that kind of . . .

SIMILAR WITH COUSINS?

Yeah, very similar with cousins, same thing.

WHY DO YOU THINK YOU STAYED?

I didn't really stay; I've been gone a lot of the time! I guess it's just freaky coincidence because I left when I was 16. My first two years of college I went to Eastern Mennonite College in Harrisonburg. From then on I've either been traveling or living overseas and it's almost by happenstance that we have this house because . . . [as I] say I left home when I was 16, basically. I came back briefly for two more years to finish at William & Mary. I came back and lived at home when I was about

19 and 20 and I got my degree at William & Mary. I moved away to start my first job and then I went to Africa to marry my husband. We spent our first year there. We came back and lived a year in North Carolina. I guess the reason we're living in this house today is that, when my husband graduated from college in North Carolina with a degree in Business Administration, my father's business needed him so my father offered him a job and we moved back here. At that point this house had been empty for 6 years, it was going to be torn down, it was an absolute trash heap. We started working on it and moved in. It happened to hit at a particular time of nesting instinct because we had our first child the next year! She's 19 now. So, we lived here about 4 years, moved away again for the next 8. We lived in the western part of the state in a log house for a while in the mountains and then we lived in Central Africa for 4 years and we had rented out the house while we were gone. We came back here in '83. We lived here for two and a half years and went to Africa again for three years and now we've been back here for three years. So probably the reason we lived here was twofold: one, the business that my husband went into for a few years with my father until my father retired and sold his business. And two, his parents lived in the area so we both had those common ties. It wasn't like he had a community elsewhere that we wanted to go to. But his family was a military family and they had traveled so much that, to him, no place was really home. He really doesn't feel attached to a place. He doesn't even feel really that attached to this house, although he likes it. [end of side A]

We didn't particularly plan to live our lives here and we may not continue to do that. Now that our children have their ties and things going it's home to them too. We were talking about coming and going from our home here and how important it's been to our children, when we ever mentioned, "Well, maybe we should sell this house and build something really simple and basic and modern, without any rough edges," the kids all say, "Well, that'd be nice but we can't sell this house, we can't get rid of this. Someday we've got to live here." We would live in Africa and rent out this house, we kept the attic for our own things so they knew that their stuff, their old toys and everything--We were coming back and this was their home, we'd keep pictures--even when they were very little. In fact, we moved away from here the first time when our son was two and recently he remembered, he said, for years he had this memory of going up the stairs at night, going up to bed, and me singing a song--"Climb, Climb Up Sunshine Mountain." He said he had this memory but he didn't know where the stairs were--because he was two when we moved away. [Her husband came in]

Paul: It was sort of a yellowish tint that the stairs were and he couldn't quite recognize it.

Kate: When he was nine we moved back to this house for the first time and that's when he realized where these stairs were that he had remembered. But, you know, it has meant a lot to them. I think it has helped emphasize the values of recycling and keeping things, not joining the throw-away feeling--that this is an old house and we're reusing it and not saying, "Oh, we're tired of it, we'll get a different house." Our children seem to have . . . well, I guess if you've grown up in these recent years it's really important to think about the environment. But I think that was important to my family, well, both our families. Your mother and my mother--neither one of them throws anything away. Your mother is different about it. My mother will reuse, you know, wax paper, aluminum foil . . .

Paul: She's certainly the ultimate ecologist and she's 80 years old.

Kate: Yeah. And even if she has plenty of money--she did grow up in the Depression when they didn't have money--but money is absolutely not the object. It's not to save money other than the fact that the joy of doing it. Money in itself doesn't mean anything to her but the fact that she hadn't spend it because she devised a neat way to reuse some dress that one of us didn't want anymore. We feel she takes it to extremes! [laughs] Our oldest daughter who's studying the environment now, in Australia--she's in the rainforest of Queensland and is studying courses like "Exotic Ecosystems" and things like that. [laughs] She's really into the environment. In fact, in her last letter she wrote, "Joke: What is Heidi's favorite mint? Environmint!" [laughs] This is a value that has really passed on through.

Paul: Another value or area of values I just might make a comment on: you mentioned old things here. Last spring we bought a 16-year-old automobile for our son and daughter to use. One of Jack's responsibilities is doing the maintenance; whether it needs brakes, oil changes. Right now it needs a new windshield. I'm going to involve him in replacing the windshield. A number of years ago, Susan's father and I drove from here to Belize and visited 3 Mennonite colonies there. They were Russian Mennonites. They emigrated to Canada in the 40s, then they moved to Mexico and, in the 60s with Mexican land reform, their land was given to the original Mexican owners so they moved across into Belize. Within a matter of years,

they were producing 85% of the food that's consumed in Belize. They provided all the fresh milk; up 'til then milk had been imported from the Netherlands. But as we drove into one of these communities, we came up to a group of 3 boys that were driving a tractor, they had a flat-bed trailer behind it and one of the wheels had fallen off of the trailer. I stopped and asked the boys if they needed help and they said, "Oh, no, we can take care of it ourselves just fine." What impressed me about this was that the oldest of the three boys was 9 years old. You know, they were 5, 6, and 9. And they were contributing in a very real way to the economic situation of the family. Dad had given them the tractor and the trailer and sent them off to take care of a job. And this is something that's missing in so many families in our urban situation today. It takes an effort to involve your children the way we are today.

Kate: A lot of parents think it's easier to just, oh, do it yourself or have someone take care of it because you have to explain things to a child and they might not do it right or they don't want to do it and fuss about it.

Paul: It *would* be a lot easier to just take it to a shop and pay a couple hundred dollars to fix it but I think there's a real valuable lesson in growing up to have our children do these things themselves. [PAUSE TAPE]

SO, WHAT SENT YOU ALL OVER THE WORLD?

Kate: Okay, that's right. That wasn't obvious, was it? Well, when I met Paul first was in this community. He had been planning . . . Oh--another aspect of the Mennonite church is a peace position rather than military. Well, I would happen to fall in love with someone from a military family right? [laughs] In fact, when I met him I was sure that we would not really be seeing each other again because he was supposed to go to boot camp. He was drafted and it was during the Vietnam War. And this was fine with him because this all fit into his family picture; he was not against the war at that time. This was in like '66. I was and my friends were, very much so. So when I met him he told me how he felt and I told him how I felt and he was about to leave a few weeks later and I was not invited to his going away party. I was not a particularly close friend. Then, one night he came tearing over to my house on his bicycle and said, "They just canceled my orders because I had a rash on my neck when I had a physical and they don't want me!" And he was really excited but at the same time he was kind of disappointed because he had dropped

out of college and didn't know what he wanted to do; then he got drafted and so he thought he'd get to see the world a little bit and go somewhere. I said, "Well, in our church we have something called Pax service and it's a service opportunity around the world. You go for two or three years and you serve in a foreign country in whatever capacity you have to offer." And he said, "I might be interested in something like that." So he looked into that program and ended up going to Zaire. This was in the 60s when Zaire was in a real pickle and they were having wars and rebels and I don't know what all. But he went. It was a hot spot to send a 20-year-old to. [laughs] Or was he 21? Something like that. By the time he went, we had known each other for 9 months. He had stayed home and worked for a while. We were pretty sure we wanted to get married.

When he went to Zaire--first he went to Europe for four months for language study, for French language study. I just happened to be able to go over that summer and travel with a girlfriend of mine then I ended up spending six weeks with him, or a month anyway, studying French also. Oh, we had a *wonderful* summer. We had these places to stay with the university and we traveled all around and rented bicycles and would go out into the countryside--it was wonderful. Then he went to Zaire for the next two years and I came back. I guess I had another year at William & Mary and then I also took a job as a publicity writer for Eastern Mennonite College. So I was gone. Well, he was asked to stay a third year in Zaire and he told them he really couldn't do that because he wanted to go home and get married. They said, "Well, what about if we brought your girlfriend down here?" This person really wanted him to stay! [laughs] He was working with a school. It was kind of like a school to help kids off the streets. It was not a secondary school that had vocational type things and cooking and typing, a library--it was just that kind of thing. He ended up being director of it. So I went over there and we got married in Zaire in 1969 and we stayed there together for another year. I taught English in a local high school. We had a really wonderful year. That was the year I wrote the book about. It was published in 1990.

Then we came back and I taught English in North Carolina for two years in public school while he got his Business Administration degree at Campbell College. That's when we moved back up here and started fixing up this old house. I did not teach; I taught the first year until I had Heidi and then I stayed home with my kids 'til they got in to school. We lived here for four years. Then my Dad sold his business and Paul was turning 30 about then and thinking of changes. He had this idea of wanting to live in an underground house [laughs] with a southern exposure in a mountainside. Well, we never quite got that but we went looking for a hillside

with a southern exposure and what we eventually found was a hillside with a southern exposure which you could eventually have built into if you wanted to but it had an old log farm house on it. So we bought that property. We planted trees on it, cleaned up the creek, lived there for two years. It did not have indoor plumbing. It was a real adventure. We had floods, snowstorms; we had all these prime ingredients for books. [laughs] We had our third baby then. That's when Krista was born.

At the end of those two years, some people got in touch with us, because of Paul's experience in Africa and knowing French, they needed someone to go with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). It ended up that we went to central Zaire working for a company called Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI) and they, in turn, were working for USAID. So we went into a village in Eastern Zaire that was a three-week drive from the capital, if we were going to drive it--which we never did. We waited for a plane and sometimes waited a long time. We took our children along. Our baby was a year old. Our oldest daughter was six. She enrolled in an African school so she went to school with a thousand Swahili-speaking girls and would pledge allegiance to Mubutu every morning. [laughs] "Mubutu, Oye!" she would yell. She learned Swahili very well. We lived there for four years. Our youngest, Krista, she was an African child.

When we came back here for visits, this was a strange country. We like to tell the story of when we first got out of the country, when she was old enough to remember (which I guess was when she was about two and a half or three) and we stopped at the airport and met a French family with a little boy about her age. He had blue eyes and blond hair. She just clung to me and kept looking at Alex and finally she whispered in my ear, "Is that me?" Because she had only seen black children. There were no white children where we lived. So she really was, definitely, an African kid. We spent those four years there and I home schooled the kids as well, in addition to her going to the African school. We met a lot of people, had a lot of peace corps volunteers in our home. In fact, to our children, the word "peace corps volunteer" is somewhere up there above a "saint"; the most special people in the world. When our daughter got to Australia this fall she said, "All the other students seem like peace corps volunteers." That was a big compliment. After those four years [cat jumped up on couch] we came back here in '83. Paul was not that crazy about coming back here. He sort of had his eye on maybe another post in Africa or something. I said, "I really think our children, at this age," (at that time they were five through 11) "I really think they need to get back in touch with who they are, who we are, what some of the pleasures of being a child in Virginia might

be." I felt like also I needed to get back in touch with myself as a professional person because I had been home-schooling and cooking and enjoying learning other languages and I was certainly expanding but I wasn't creating any sort of career for myself that was anything you could touch. He didn't know anything he wanted to do in Virginia so we came back in '83 and he became Mr. Mom. I went back to teaching and he did not get a job for the next couple of years. He was the Dad who took the kids on field trips. If Krista fell into a mud puddle at school and needed a change of clothes, they called him. He had a lot of other projects he was working on that were helpful to the family whether it was remodeling, repairing the chimney or rebuilding the engine in his car. He kept busy at worthwhile, helpful projects but they were not paid jobs. And that was a very good time for our family. I taught at Hines Middle School. Our oldest daughter was in the sixth and seventh grade. We kind of reversed roles and found out what it was like to do that. He kept house. The only thing he didn't do was he didn't cook. [laughs] He still doesn't do that. He leaves that to me. But he did do a lot of cleaning. [Paul comes in the room] Right? [laughs] I was just talking about when you were Mr. Mom. I said you did a lot of cleaning but you sure didn't do any cooking. Well, you did one or two meals which will live forever in infamy. [laughs] I think they were done on purpose.

Paul: Not really. I was doing my best. [much laughter]

Kate: After two years of that, he got another--another contact was made with the University of Arizona. They asked us to go to West Africa. He would be financial or business manager of a project in the desert of West Africa. Again, it was in a very remote place and I would have to home-school the children. But the kids were very eager for it. They had such nostalgia for Africa. Even though it was going to be hard for them to leave their friends. Our kids went to the Warwick River Christian School, the same one I went to when I was little, even though it was different, a different set-up, different groups of people; it was not just a community school as it had been. Those teachers were wonderful. When we left and went overseas again, they kept sending letters and making our children feel that they had a place back here. Our kids would send stories and letters back and forth. That school kept our kids feeling like they were not adrift in the world; they had a home, they had a group of people that would miss them and would remember them and would know them when they got back. That proved to be true. During those two or three years we had many adventures with amateur radio. In fact, that man that just called just now was someone we met on the radio. Our horizons were really broadened and our

kids' were. They learned to speak French. They had learned a little in Zaire but it was spoken more in Mauritania. Our son got his HAM radio license in Mauritania and was speaking to people all over the world. His buddies were the German ambassador to Mauritania [laughs] and some other people like that who were also HAM radio operators. These adults took such time with our children. And that's been one of the biggest influences on their lives. By being in some of these outposts, they were sort of upgraded to the status as just human beings whereas a lot of kids today, you do something with just kids your age. "You go in the 9-year-old group and you go play soccer with them." You don't necessarily just do things with adults by choice. Our kids found adults to be their friends. The adults enjoyed it because there weren't that many kids around, that type of kid around. So, it was a mutually agreeable situation. They still have contacts with adults who write to them, almost separately from Paul and me, you know, they kept up a friendship. When those three years were over, I started doing free lance writing then because I could teach them . . . it wouldn't take my whole day to do so. Housework could take a lot of effort in a country like that. That was until '88. In 1988 we came back to our house and our older daughter was in high school. In fact, we had sent her away to high school the last year, to western Virginia, to a boarding school, her tenth grade. To Eastern Mennonite High School where she could get some experiences. You know, as a 15-year-old, she didn't need to sit at home doing her school work with her mother. That could be a little stifling after a while. She didn't really complain. But she needed the opportunities for music and drama and science and all these others things. She's the one who's off in Australia now. So you can see that they have not turned against the way they were raised because they really--they still enjoy the travel but they also like having the roots, a little bit the way we planned it. The last couple of years I've been teaching most of the time and Paul is now working in the Virginia Living Museum. That's sort of the nutshell here with . . . a lot of other things that could be said but don't need to be. [laughs]

IT'S INTERESTING HOW YOUR EXPERIENCE OF LIVING OUTSIDE OF THE COUNTRY RELATES TO YOUR FEELING OF COMMUNITY HERE.

Mmhm.

AND WHETHER MAYBE THERE'S AN EVEN LARGER COMMUNITY OF MENNONITES YOU'RE AWARE OF, PERHAPS EVEN MORE THAN THIS PARTICULAR ONE?

Well, that is true too. Although in our married life our contacts have not been necessarily with Mennonites when we've been overseas although since a lot of Mennonites do enjoy doing service in the world, there's a lot of emphasis on service opportunities and you tend to often meet people. Some of these things cross paths with government things as well. One of our best friends who worked with us on a project in Zaire, had worked with Mennonite Central Committee, as Paul had with his Pax Service, this young man had done this in Pakistan. Afghanistan? Pakistan. And then they came together on this government project and they worked together very well because they had kind of absorbed the Mennonite way of consensus and compromise and kind of working together rather than being, well, I should say that's my perception of the Mennonite world although there is the other . . . there's that leader I was telling you about who had been the autocratic, this-is-the-way-things-are. There were those at a certain point and people do grow up, you know, emerge who have these authoritarian--or they used to. I don't see that happening presently in the Mennonite church. It's more: do your own thing but be a community. Care for each other and support each other but allow for differences and be tolerant. That's more the way I feel that the present-day Mennonite church is and the people who are my contemporaries.

But there is a larger circle of Mennonite acquaintances that are important in my life and some of those people were formed, say for example, when I was eleven I went to a camp in western Pennsylvania--my fist time away from home. At that camp I met these three girls. I and another girl had come from this community and she was my cousin. The other two girls had been friends already. And we tease each other because I was eleven and maybe they were twelve and this was still the age when there was a lot of debate about dress and there were standards and people looked at each other and figured where you were on the continuum of worldly and modest and plain or whatever. And these girls were a little bit more advanced in the modesty than what we girls from Denbigh were! [laughs] Because we showed up and we were not wearing head coverings and we had our braids hanging down, we had not put them up and I don't know what clothes we were wearing but this one girl turned to the other and said, "Oh, look at the heathens we're having in our cabin!" [Laughs] "Look at the heathens we're going to put up with in our cabin!" Well, before that day was out, we had all become the best of friends. And so that's one of our favorite phrases ever since. But the four of us, from the time we were eleven--one was from West Virginia, one from Pennsylvania and the two of us from here--we got together every summer of our teenage years, from twelve on, whether it was in the mountains of West Virginia, or at the beach or one of our homes. We kept

these gigantic circle letters going.

Over the years those girls, of course, grew up into women and have families and everybody is in a different position now but everyone is still, they're all part of the Mennonite church and they're all, say, active or important in their areas and real special people. We have kept that friendship going. We still get together on a regular basis, as regular as we can. We keep that circle letter going. It's amazing. I felt like, when I was overseas, these girls were a little bit like my church to me because the way we could share things. They would write about books they had recently read, people they had talked to, or interesting stories or the struggles their own lives were going through. One of them is an art teacher and an artist at a Mennonite high school in Pennsylvania. Her husband is a science teacher and they live in an ancestral, gorgeous old farm house with all the antiques of the Pennsylvania Dutch era. A real creative family. Another one lives in South Carolina and they work with Habitat for Humanity. The other family, he's a doctor and she is in study right now for occupational therapy. They did service in Puerto Rico and adopted a Puerto Rican daughter. They also volunteered for a long time in the heart of Jackson Mississippi, in a black area where doctors were needed. They spent about ten years there, maybe. And now he's studying psychiatry. Anyway we just keep in touch and I feel like they're my larger Mennonite family, partly. Then also I have people I learned to know in college, at Eastern Mennonite College when I was there the first two years and when I worked there for a year. [Kate's mother arrived at this time. The tape was stopped and we chatted a while]

. . . We were talking about going and coming back and the value of seeing the community from a distance and coming back and being a part of it again. There's a couple of angles there. First of all there's that feeling of roots and that you have a place that feels really good because it's home. And the places feel good, you know just coming back and walking around in this house, even when there were other people living in it; coming back and going over to my flower bed and seeing the lilies of the valley blooming that my grandmother had planted and maybe raking leaves and sort of getting in touch with the actual physical part of, "This was my grandfather's land." I mean, I don't *really* dwell on the grandfather part of it because when he lived here this house wasn't all that special to me. My [paternal] grandfather was more of a formal person and it was my grandfather [name deleted] who lived, my mother's father, who lived with us who was the kind who was very loving and affectionate and very close to his grand children. My other grandfather was very history-conscious, very family-conscious but he was more, a little more reserved person, more dignified, not quite so out-going and affectionate. So it wasn't

so much the idea of coming here and feeling that because it was my grandfather's house and community that, oh, I was so glad to be back. But I was getting more in touch with my *own* experiences, even as an adult. This is the house where I brought my first baby home from the hospital, where Paul and I had fun making mistakes trying to repair a house with no money and the times that we would get mad at each other because we were trying to hang wallpaper and it was midnight and it wasn't going well! [laughs] Those were more the kinds of things that I was really coming back to. But it always helped to know that my great grandfather had planted this Mimosa tree or my aunt and uncle had gotten married under this tree. You know, little things like that I do find interesting.

There's another aspect of the community; [it] is not so much coming back to get strokes or to feel good but I have a certain feeling of responsibility coming back too. I look at older people in the community who are, say, my aunts and uncles or people who are the parents of my generation; the people who would take me to the state fair or fix a Sunday dinner for me to come home from church with their daughter, always remembered that I liked corn and fixed corn for me. You know, those kinds of people. And now I see them aging and--those that are still here--and I feel a certain feeling of responsibility to them and interest in them and care. You don't just come back to get something to make *you* feel good and get nurture or whatever but to feel like you have something to give back because of the years. I felt like, growing up, that everybody liked me and everybody was proud of me and everybody was my friend. It was a very affirming feeling growing up. I was probably good enough to be approved by everybody and . . . naughty enough to be interesting! [laughs] I mean, not naughty, but I wasn't just kind of a blah good person. I mean, I was good but I was also. . . pushing out a little bit, I guess, at the edges . . . not in a rebellious way but just kind of in an adventuresome way. I always felt very much affirmed and appreciated by the community and the church and not just my individual church but also the three or four other Mennonite churches in the area. I can remember one of our pastors whose daughter was one of my friends, he told somebody else when I was a teenager, he said, "You know, they just don't make girls any better than Susan and Judy and Bunny," he named these girls. So I just felt, you know, affirmed and [mic fell] And so you know now that these people are in their 70s and 80s and you know, getting older, being a little forgetful and getting sick, I feel like, well, a lot of their children are gone and moved away [cat made herself comfortable in my lap] [laughs] You have a friend . . . and that's another reason to be a part of the community, I think for me, to realize that cycle of life goes on. I'm in the middle age group where there's the kids but then there are the older people.

There's that aspect of coming back. And then, not seeing things stay the same but seeing things change.

The community as it is now is really not the community of four years ago at all. There's some vestiges of it but it isn't. . . but like I said, then for my children, this was the place that they knew they had their sort of identity, where they could come back and people knew who they were, they weren't just strangers wandering in a strange city and they weren't ethnically different from the people they were around and people who knew their relatives. I remember when Krista was a baby and we came back and visited my mother. She couldn't remember my mother very well, of course, she had been a baby when we left. And this was just a year or eighteen months later but . . . [cat sinking claws in my knees] if she bothers you . . . did she scratch?

NO, SHE'S JUST HANGING ON.

Oh, we could put her out . . . I remember when we came back we were having breakfast at my mother's house. Krista was a very independent baby and she didn't like people to pick her up and move her or anything like that. My mother just picked up the whole chair that she was sitting on and moved it over to make more room at the table or something. I could see Krista was getting ready to protest, that it bothered her to be moved. Then, she looked at me and said, "It's okay if Nana move my chair because, she's your mother." [laughs] She was kind of like, I guess I'll put up with this. There's precedent for it. [laughs] Our kids had the feeling . . . It was sort of like when we went to church for the first time when we came back because when we were in Africa we didn't really have a church that we went to. Well, there were several comments but Jack was about, I guess, five. We went the first time and on the way the second day he said, "I don't really like to go," he said, "but I know you like it so I guess I'll go." He already sensed it was an important place for me and that I had missed it from being away for a long time. He couldn't see the value in it but he recognized that it was important for me. So I guess that was community right there. But Krista--she was about two and a half--we were about half way through that first church service and all of a sudden she said in this really loud voice, "Is *this* church!?" [laughs] As if she had been expecting something more fun! [laughs] She just wasn't too impressed, sitting there on the bench, not much action and [laughs].

HAD SHE EVER REALLY EXPERIENCED A SERVICE?

Yes, and she had in Zaire because a couple times we had visited African churches. But it was totally different there because kids were running in and out and, you know, drums [laughs] it was just a little more [laughs] women were [she demonstrates--"ah" at about high "C"] screaming and it was just a little less laid-back than here [laughs]. Also that same church service, the minister asked, "Does anyone have anything to say?" --this was after the service . . . if anyone had anything to say before we dismissed and she said real loudly, "Let's go home!" [laughs] Throughout the whole church; everybody laughed. So they were a little bit unconventional here but they were kind of catching on.

AT LEAST THE REST OF THE PEOPLE ENJOYED THE ENTERTAINMENT.

Definitely, definitely. A lot of people said, "She expressed exactly what I was thinking!" [laughs] But the children have really enjoyed coming back to the community. They haven't always found a best friend their age, say, at church. They haven't locked into that same sense--like, I had six or eight or ten girls my age and they all had large families and they had lots of kids and there would always be someone my age. That's not necessarily true now. And maybe the young people go to different schools and don't see each other during the week--that go to the same church--and it's not quite the same sense of community there. But I think they get the sense of community from the older people and now Krista really enjoys the young moms with the babies who like her to babysit. They just see community goes out into the different ages. [pauses] You know, you don't always fit into your community when you come back, either. You don't expect to be the same . . . I know when we first came back, our children, in school, they would not say anything about where they had been and what they were doing, especially if they were in a public school. A couple of times, when they would be studying a certain thing, I would say to Heidi, "Why don't you tell the teacher about when you visited such and such." She'd say, "I don't want the kids to say, 'Oh, there she goes again, talking about where she's been.'" And so she would be quiet. They didn't want to be--especially middle school age, you don't want to stand out and be too different. But they always did stand out. There was always sort of a difference about them because of what they had seen and experienced.

HAVE YOU TALKED TO THEM ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE OF GROWING UP AROUND HERE (IN THE MENNONITE COMMUNITY)?

Compared to my experience of growing up here?

PERHAPS COMPARED TO THEIR PEERS WHO DID STAY HERE (THROUGHOUT THEIR CHILDHOOD YEARS)?

They feel that people here have no idea of the rest of the world and they know they can't tell them, that they'd almost have to see it for themselves. Some times they'll come home and mention what someone said--they don't as much now because they've been home longer--but, they'd come home and say that someone asked, "Did you all live in grass huts?" And our daughters would say, "Well, no. We lived in a brick house but we had friends who lived in grass huts." Then they would realize that the kid here was writing off people who lived in grass huts as being totally out of it. And then another time--and this was even at church--we had taken a tape of a Swahili church service. We *loved* the music. It was very home-made and people were singing, there was a choir and they had gravel in bug spray cans to shake and things like that. We were playing that music before the service started, the recording we had just made of some people at the African church, and people were kind of laughing about it saying, "It sounds so strange!" I remember our kids were offended and I felt offended. I knew it was different but it didn't seem like something to laugh about. [end of first tape]

DESCRIBE YOUR EXPERIENCE OF THE MENNONITE COMMUNITY TODAY, AS COMPARED WITH YOUR EXPERIENCE GROWING UP.

My family and I definitely do consider ourselves a part of the Mennonite community today but there are big differences. One is that the community has changed so much in the sense that the composition of the people who attend the church that I had grown up attending--they're not necessarily all offspring of the people who were here in the generations since 1900. There are a good number of elderly people in the church who are from the original colony but many people are from other backgrounds, other ethnic backgrounds. So the whole idea of the community has changed: not so much from people from the same biological families and ethnic groups as more people who have chosen to be a church, and have chosen to participate in it for one reason or another.

One of the things that has attracted people who perhaps didn't grow up in this community was the fact that people do a lot of mutual support and caring and helping each other in times of . . . whatever, that it is kind of a family atmosphere.

Part of the Mennonite tradition anyway and faith is that you live your daily life in a Christian manner, and that includes whether you're at work or in the community, that you carry out this feeling of concern for each other and help each other. It might be when people have trouble with jobs or a death in the family--just all the different stresses in life--a new baby. I'm thinking of last week, one of our friends just had a baby and the people in the church had a casserole shower earlier for her; she could put all these things in the freezer and night by night take them out, so she wouldn't have to cook for a few weeks. And some of us took over fresh meals besides, just as a way of saying, "We care about you and when you're having the stress of a new baby plus an 18-month-old we want to be able to share in that joy but also the nuts and bolts part of it too!"

Last night I was taking part in a meeting of the church council because I am presently responsible for the youth and children in the congregation. What I mean by that is I am the representative on the church council that has to do with children and youth activities--it doesn't mean I do everything. One of the items on discussion was Thanksgiving. We put a lot of emphasis on "giving" as well as "Thanksgiving" and people--it seems to me that Mennonites are very food oriented! [laughs] Our church just keeps putting out more cookbooks--But the idea of giving something more concrete. Everyone goes out the week before with grocery bags with lists in them and during the week families fill the grocery bags with those items. You come into the church with them and they're given to Denbigh United Christian Outreach where homeless and families that are in time economic stress can come in and just get food. And this is something that appeals to Mennonites. And it appeals to my family too. We've lived overseas where you realize that ideas aren't worth much if people's tummies are empty. This is something I would say has kept us in the church. There is a big emphasis on service and doing concrete things. Now my husband is not an ethnic Mennonite, he did not grow up in this area. We met in this area because his parents bought a house on what was old colony property. But this is one thing that he really responds to because he is not much of a person for theology but he is for action and he likes the idea that you put your faith into shoe leather and do things. This is one thing--I appreciated the emphasis that my family had growing up, particularly my father--the whole world was interesting to him. Out of the seven of us in my family, five of us have lived overseas and worked, most of us, with service organizations. This is one thing that we have appreciated about the church--a church which you might think would be provincial in the sense that it grew up as a community, with close, it seemed close and authoritarian and different. But for some reason it seemed to me that we were able to look to other countries and

to other culture in a more sympathetic manner than maybe mainstream Americans, I don't know. That was my impression and my husband's impression when he met Mennonites for the first time as a 20-year-old.

As far as involvement right now and why: we have wanted to have our children raised as much as possible with faith and roots and this seemed the best way to do it. I don't really go around picking a church, going down a list of every little bity belief and say, yes, okay 99%, I'll go here. It's more the feeling of community and . . . singing is a big part of the church and that's something our children have always enjoyed, even if they grew up a lot of the time away. We sang and music has been--the a cappella singing we do in our congregation is different from many churches. We use instruments, although in the past no instruments were used. Everything was a cappella. Personally, I like that emphasis. I had to laugh because last night at the church council meeting we sang "Happy Birthday" to another person whose person whose birthday was yesterday and everyone one broke into four-part harmony singing "Happy Birthday!" [laughs] Last weekend was *my* birthday and I was with Paul's relatives and when the whole 20 people that were there tried to sing "Happy Birthday," no one was in tune! [laughs] Just to get the main tune! I had to laugh because you almost take for granted growing up that you could divide into four-part harmony if you, you know, even for a simple song like "Happy Birthday." To me, that has been an aid to worship or a big part of what I call church, is the singing.

Krista, our daughter, interviewed a woman this week for a school class and this is an 84-year-old black woman who goes to our church. She's a very unconventional woman. She lives close to the church. Krista had interviewed her and she asked her why she came to our church. And the woman said, "Well, for years I'd walked past and would heard this singing." [laughs] And then, actually, it was a friend and neighbor who invited her to go and kept on asking and finally just took her. I had to laugh because I could just imagine her walking by and hearing singing. Although I can hardly imagine when that was because with air-conditioning the doors are closed and I would think you couldn't hear that much--but that was her idea, that singing was very important.

Our children have not grown up as close to the church, in a way, because they did not have that feeling--like I did-- that all my friends were Mennonites, mostly, and everybody that went to my school, practically, at that time, was also a Mennonite. They haven't had that but they have still retained, I think, a deep appreciation for it and a feeling that it is their church. I was curious as to how that happened, not having grown up in it. But it does seem to have happened. None of

them have gotten to the point where they say I don't want to go to church there anymore. Although it is true that there aren't a lot of young people. There are little people like babies, and young couples and then there are older people. It seems like the demographics of our church is where there are a lot of older, retired people--who are very important to me, special to me and to my children. But there isn't a large group of people their age. So they have found more like--Krista enjoys taking care of other people's babies, doing the nursery, baby-sitting during the week, taking a pack of little kids out to the playground after church and swinging them, and having a bunch of people in church say "Krista, Krista!" when she comes in because they all want to sit with her in church.

A lot of her friends who were her age have moved away. This is one thing that has happened a lot in this church. A lot of the families that were a strong part of the church, didn't want to stay in the area when it changed from a rural environment, or from a more back-to-nature environment. Just a year or two ago a family who had a daughter Krista's age moved out into the Appalachian area and built a house for themselves, wanted to plant an orchard, do things that were more back-to-nature. This place doesn't lend itself to that--not Newport News, anyway. Maybe up in Williamsburg you can still find some places or northwest of Williamsburg. So that has changed the composition of the church quite a bit. Another reason why some people have chosen to live in other areas, by being a peace church, we're sort of socked in the middle of quite a military establishment in Newport News and Norfolk and all this is very strongly, heavily military. I don't think that in itself has been the reason why anybody has moved but it would not be a place that would attract people moving in as it did in 1900--"oh, here's this wonderful open land where people can move in and make their homes." A number of people have moved to Alberta, Canada and the western part of this state. So that has changed the composition. Some people have said that the people with more new ideas and more energy and ambition and initiative are the ones who went ahead and moved away from this area. Whereas community members who have just stayed as they were, have stayed here and just kind of left remnants here in the church. I don't know that I agree with that.

WHICH OF THE MENNONITE CHURCHES DO YOU GO TO?

I go to Warwick River, the one that's half a mile down the road, next to the school which is a subsidiary of the church.

HOW ARE THE CHURCH SERVICES DIFFERENT FROM WHEN YOU WERE GROWING UP?

Just minor details, I would say, over all when I was growing up you would have sunday school, you would have church, in which you would have congregational singing of two or three songs, you would have someone reading the bible, you would have a prayer, you would have a minister that preached quite a long time! [laughs] As I recall. And then afterwards everyone would stand around and talk and visit for a long time. That was an important part. That was when I was growing up. Now we come to church at 9:30, as it was back then. You have a gathering, they call opening exercises for sunday school, then break up into classes. I would say about 100 people come to sunday school. At 10:30, something that we have now that we didn't have then would be a musical prelude of some sort where either you have a child like Krista playing the piano while people are coming in or a couple of times we've had a few young couples up there singing and letting the audience join in on choruses and things like that. We also have a family that has a string quartet in the family. In fact, I should give you this. This is a paper that our church has been giving out to the community free of charge. The fist couple of pages are standard all over the country and the center fold is about our community and they just did something on me and I wrote this article about another . . . and this is the family I was talking about with the string quartet. This tells you some basic things about the church. Every couple of months the local Mennonite churches cooperate in sending that out. The family that's featured in that will often be playing, it depends on what talents are available. Then the service will begin with singing, congregational singing without piano or organ accompaniment. They may use the piano for something but not while the congregation is singing, that's just the custom. That's the same as it was before. Although when I was growing up and the old church was there, there were never any musical instruments at all that was against the rules.

One thing that's different is that now it seems we have more something called open time, sharing time. This is during the morning service where people are free to share anything they want to share with the congregation. Anyone can stand up and say something that they are happy about or not happy about or someone they're concerned about, health concerns or something they're thankful for. After that there's congregational prayer where some of those things are addressed. I don't remember that when I was growing up although I remember people, usually just older men, standing up and saying things they felt like saying. But you didn't feel like the women . . . oh, and also I remember when I was pretty little the women sat

on the left side and men sat on the right, pretty much. There were a few families toward the back that sat together but the older women were used to sitting on the left and the men on the right. That's totally gone. People of course sit where they want to and I don't see any trace of it left. People sit as families. When I was a child there were women in front (on the left and men on the right) and about half-way back there was a row of girls my age. That would have been a nightmare, when I think about it. We probably giggled and passed each other our wallets and wrote notes and things because there would be a whole string of girls the same age on the same bench. We probably weren't *too* bad but I'm sure we weren't always paying attention. Now people are more likely to sit as a family, although I think friends would still go and sit together. The sermon is probably not as long as it was.

I think in the past it was, you would never have seen a woman in the pulpit whereas, we don't have a woman minister but we've had women ministers visit and speak. That would not have been allowed. That would have been considered heresy when I was little to have a woman standing in the preacher's spot. So, there have been changes, they've probably been fairly subtle. There would a recognizable, gigantic overall difference but just in these small details.

WE WERE TALKING ABOUT THE PRAYER COVERING LAST TIME . . . THERE WAS SOME USE OF THEM, AT LEAST GOING TO CHURCH?

When I grew up the older women wore them all the time because the foundation of the prayer covering was some place in Corinthians I guess where it says that a woman who prays or prophesizes without her head covered dishonors her head--and that was interpreted to mean Christ. It was taught that women should have their heads covered at all times. It was also supposed to be a reflection on their husbands. I never could figure that one out! [laughs] They didn't have to wear anything! There was something about that. Oh, and long hair, long hair that was uncut. So, as I grew up, all the women in the community had long hair that they put up either in buns on the backs of their heads or braids that went around and then they had head coverings. In the older generations their head coverings were like bonnets almost with strings and very, very plain and set apart. Although these were similar to what European women, you look at some of Rembrandt's and Rubens' paintings and these Dutch women with their white caps. So it was culture that had come by way of their German, Dutch backgrounds, that would have been appropriate in those centuries was sort of held onto. As I was growing up I was the generation that wore it some of the time for a while but I mentioned that. Then we went

through a time when the only place you would ever wear it was going into church, sort of like Catholics that used to wear the veil as they went into church. So you would keep this little circle of net and put it on as you went into church. Then, gradually, it was no longer taught and people were interpreting it as not something that everyone was required to wear and putting a more liberal interpretation on that piece of scripture. So from the time that I was grown up--when I left the community the first time to go away, that was the last time I wore one. Like I said the last few years it was simply just when you went into a church meeting but it was important and people looked for them. If they weren't there, people would have been shocked. You know, it was that kind of thing for a while. Then eventually by going away and not wearing it and coming back it was like, no, I'm not going to do that anymore. Now there are just a few older women in the congregation, like my mother and some others, who will wear that into church but you could probably count them on one hand. [Her mother was wearing a cap when she visited during our last interview, a wednesday evening] None of the younger women are wearing those. That has passed out in *this* community but it is still strong in some communities, in other states.

HOW MUCH CONTACT WITH MOVIES AND TELEVISION DID YOU HAVE GROWING UP?

We didn't have a television at home at all when I was little and it was considered against church rules far back, I don't know when it was. It wasn't even a question in my family because my parents didn't want it so it wasn't like, when can we get one? Like some families were hoping for a break in the rules somewhere. We didn't have it and my parents still don't. But when I was little it seemed as though television came sneaking into the community before movies did. Movies were something you *went* to and paid money to go to whereas television, you know, "Well, we need to watch the news." [laughs] Those are attitudes that I probably heard around me. Oh, I loved to go down to a neighbor's house on sunday evenings and watch Walt Disney, I can't remember what it was, Walt Disney something. It was on at 6:00 on sunday evenings and if my parents ever let me do that, I just thought it was the most wonderful thing in the world because we didn't have that. But I didn't go to a real movie until I was about 17.

DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT IT WAS?

Yeah, it was probably, it was one of the musicals, it was probably "Oklahoma!" or something like that. [laughs] But I remember--see, I was a young 16 when I went to college because I had skipped a grade or so, and I went to Eastern Mennonite College my first two years and it was against the college rules to go to movies but I didn't really know that . . . [faintly] I don't think. And I remember some boy inviting me to go to JMU to see, was it "War and Peace" or what was it? And I said, "Sure, I'd be glad to." And then he said, "You do know that it's against the rules." I thought, "Why did he have to say anything?" So I said, "I guess I won't go then." I remember being really provoked at him for, you know, the way he said it! If he had only kept his mouth shut, I wouldn't have known, I would have just gone. Also, probably because I didn't like him that much. If I had liked him a whole lot, I might have said, "Yes, I will anyway!" [laughs] I don't know. At that time I was a conscientious person and if there were rules, I did not try to break them. But, yeah, I remember going to "Oklahoma!" and "West Side Story" and some of those that were just coming out. I had no desire to go to movies that I didn't think were good movies. The idea of going to the movies itself was not like a *wonderful secret dream* but going to a movie of something I thought was good literature and a good movie, I really did enjoy those. But of course, that was never an issue now with my family coming up, that was never an issue.

WAS THERE EVER A SENSE THAT THERE WERE SOME BOOKS YOU SHOULDN'T BE READING?

Oh, yeah, I'm sure there were but books in themselves were such good things [laughs] that you didn't have the--it was just like movie, the word "movie" was bad in fact, you sort of said "film". If you said "film" it wasn't quite so bad. [laughs] That was funny--the connotations that words can get. I remember in Warwick High School there were books that I remember reading--I read voraciously--like reading some of Ayn Rand's books that my advanced composition teacher wanted me to read, like The Fountainhead and stuff. I remember thinking that this certainly has some parts I wouldn't want my mother to know I was reading. [laughs] But for some reason, I never considered them--even though I was a conscientious person--I didn't think it was sinful to read these books because I felt like it was more of a discovery than anything else and, if I were like addicted to trashy novels and couldn't put them down, I would have thought something was wrong but I just sort of read a little of everything. My parents, really, my mother was so busy with her family, she wasn't really that much aware of what I was reading and I didn't feel that my dad would

sense even that much. I don't remember getting that much from, like in the Christian school, good literature was really encouraged, and the classics and choosing good literature but I didn't get the feeling of censorship so much. I think today there's more of that in certain fundamental groups, like ban the books, get the books out of the library that mention something that you don't think is good. I don't remember that feeling when I was growing up or if I did it ran off of my back, that wasn't so much of an issue for me, personally, anyway. For some of a reason I feel that today books are more of an issue in some places. Groups are trying to get books out of libraries but I didn't get that feeling from growing up.

HAS ANYTHING LIKE THAT HAPPENED SINCE YOUR CHILDHOOD?

Not really. No because it seems as though at that time lives were more--the things that you did were, there was more of a rating, you these things. You either had a t.v. or you didn't. You went to movies or you didn't. You wore the head covering or you didn't. You had short sleeves or you had long sleeves. It reminds me of how in the Muslim religion that we were exposed to in West Africa, you had these things that you did and they made you feel secure because when you did them you had fulfilled your obligation. I'm not saying that that's how the Mennonites were because a lot of people that I knew just felt that they were doing all this out of the love of God and the love of their community. But as I look back, it was also a way of saying, "We know where we stand because of what we're doing. We do all of these things and then we're in harmony." That was a big word: harmony with the other people in the church. But today diversity is much more encouraged and you don't have people saying, "You read that book? Well, that wouldn't be a fit book for a Christian to read or a Mennonite to read." That isn't something that I would have picked up at this point and I don't think that my children have picked up although I still try to encourage books that would encourage good thoughts and would just be a good influence rather than otherwise. I think the way to accomplish that is to expose children to good books and reading. We just finished reading To Kill a Mockingbird, Krista and I, out loud at night. We still do that when we can. And that's how I passed that on to my children.

DO YOU THINK THAT WAS THE WAY YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS WERE BROUGHT UP? JUST EXPOSURE TO THESE THINGS?

No, I'm sure we weren't. Well, that was not intentional, with our mother to be sure. She didn't feel like she needed to expose us to anything. She was more like

trying to protect us and nurture us. She would not have felt we needed exposure to anything. She would have thought we were better off not to have--whereas I think my father would have thought the opposite. So I think I kind of had the feeling that for my father--he was a wide reader, he read a lot and I'm sure he was encouraging us to read things whereas my mother was more like, "Why do you need to put thoughts like that in your head?" So I don't think there was a one way of raising us. I think I probably got the push and pull kind of feeling from my parents in that respect.

WERE THERE A LOT OF OVERT RESTRICTIONS?

No, not really. No, it was more just understood. It was more like what you knew you shouldn't do. [laughs] I just remembered when I was eleven, I went shopping with one of my girlfriends to downtown Newport News and makeup was another thing you didn't wear and I remember going in and buying red fingernail polish! [laughs] Krista's staring at me. And that would have been a dumb thing to buy because you can't really hide that, I mean, it would be one thing . . . you could put on mascara or lipstick and quickly wipe it off whereas--I didn't know anything about fingernail polish remover either! I just bought the fingernail polish and brought it home but then I wanted to hide it, you know, I didn't want my mother to see it. Well, then my brother got a hold of it and started painting on the windows with it, this red fingernail polish. I knew that--it wasn't like my mother said, "Now you should never wear fingernail polish." She never said that but it was kind of like, oh, people who do, they're different from us. It was more a sense of this is how we do it and this is how the other people in the world do it. It was not so much overt. Although, when the shorter skirts started coming in [laughs]

THAT MUST HAVE BEEN WILD.

It was, because . . . my younger sisters dealt with this more than I because I had left home pretty much in the 60s and it was the late 60s when the skirts got really short and early 70s, I guess. My mother, it kept her so busy. When she did the laundry, she would let down hems! [laughs] She said, "Even a half inch helps." They were some short skirts, I admit when I look at some of these pictures of my sisters and the skirts were really short. So my mother had a lot to get used to.

THAT'S INTERESTING BECAUSE I'VE HEARD A COUPLE THINGS NOW THAT MAKE IT SOUND AS IF THE TEENAGERS LED THE WAY.

They did. That's exactly right. It wasn't like the church said, "Okay, now it's going to be okay for you all to do this or that."

THEY JUST SORT OF WENT OUT AND BOUGHT SOME MINISKIRTS AND STUFF LIKE THAT?

Right, exactly. Just did what they wanted. I remember something, I remember my sisters too, it was when short A-line skirts were in and you could roll them up once [at the waist] [laughs] I think that's what some of my sisters would do. They would go to school with the skirts [down to knees] and when they would get to school they would roll them up once and put a sweater over and it would be a little shorter. So there was and yeah, there would be debates and battles at home like, "That skirt is too short. It doesn't look good. You're showing too much of your leg." Whatever. I would hear that from my mother.

HOW DID THE COLONY DEAL WITH THE LATE 60s EARLY 70s, ESPECIALLY WITH THE EXPOSURE TO THE PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL?

Well, it was just acceptance and acculturation, really. It was just the gradual changes that came when you're assimilated into a larger community. Also the whole world was changing. When I went I went to high school, nobody would have worn skirts that short and that was in the late 50s, early 60s; I graduated in '62. No one would have worn pants or shorts to school. The whole world changed too, it wasn't just the Mennonite community, back from earlier times so people were getting used to it on both fronts I guess. But you're right. Probably that was it, people just made changes. And we had leaders who were kind, I mean we did not have the older leader who had gone before my time and who was very strict and probably would have asked people to leave the church, it was like take it or leave it. Love it or leave it, you know. It wasn't like, "Can we negotiate on this point?" But I think in the later years we had ministers who were more tolerant and accommodating who also had young families that were changing and it was a different leadership.

The whole church was changing. The kids would go away to college and come home with different values. They would even go to Mennonite colleges and come home with changes. They may not have been appreciated but they were accepted. I don't mean the people, I mean the changes. I think that is how that worked. During the time I've grown up we've never had an autocratic leader who was trying to make everybody follow the same rule. I have not experienced that. Otherwise I would not be there, I don't think, you know, because I would not have felt comfortable with that kind of leadership in my life. So that's where those changes have come about probably.

WAS THE COUNTER CULTURE A BIG ISSUE HERE?

Like the hippies in the '60s?

YEAH. REBELLING AGAINST "MIDDLE CLASS VALUES" OR MATERIALISM.

Yeah, I think that was definitely a part of the 60s all over. I grew up in the 60s, I was in college in the '60s and my friends and I ran the gamut. I had friends

who went off and lived in communes and I had friends who tried alternative methods of living, like intentional communities and this may even have been spiritual communities, not hippie-like but exploring alternatives racially, mixing races, civil rights. I had--people in my generation, maybe not so much in this community, there were some, but as I met people from the larger community we got involved in that. But not in the sense of drugs. I'm not saying there weren't people who did that. I think there probably would have been a percentage of any family who would have gone off and left the--oh, another thing would have been no alcohol. And I had friends and acquaintances who left the community and abandoned that practice and ended up actually becoming alcoholic because of the no restraint kind of thing; they sort of crossed over the line and went to the other extreme.

DO YOU SEE ANY SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THESE ALTERNATIVE LIFESTYLES AND THE MENNONITE COMMUNITY WHICH ALREADY SORT OF HAD A HISTORY OF "BACK TO BASICS" OR PLAIN LIVING?

Well I never felt I had to rebel in the sense of having to turn 180 degrees away from my parents. In some ways I felt like our lifestyle was more of a rebellion than Paul's family's standpoint because he came from three generations of military officers and there was a lot emphasis on wealth and homes and cars, you know, material--it seemed to me, compared to what I had come from. So we didn't have to counter--I felt like we were more a counter culture toward his side of the family . . .

[The tape ran out. I failed to restart it immediately. I had asked her about something she said after the last interview. She had said something to the effect that she thought children today are age-segregated. She implied that her contact with people of all ages when she was growing up was an important part of her experience of community. She is describing her experience in the Mennonite day school, specifically the fact that all the elementary-age kids were taught in the same room so that she was aware of the teacher leading both the more advanced lessons and the lessons she'd already been through herself. She remembers how she envied the older kids when they practiced their fractions via blackboard competitions.]

. . . She [the teacher] would give them an oral thing like "Add five and three-eighths and seven and six-eighths." So they would write down the fractions and convert them to equal denominators, uh, common denominators and add and see who could get the answers the quickest. I just thought that was such a mysterious proceeding because they'd get up there and the boys would write the fraction bars and the equal marks and the pluses and the minuses and stuff before she would do the numbers so that they could quickly write them in. And I thought, how in the world do they know what they're doing? [laughs] I was just so impressed. So by the time I was getting to where I was learning the fractions it was like, oh, yeah, I can't wait. I really wanted to know this. And then if you were in an older group and you would hear

the teacher going over something with the third-graders, that could serve as a review for you. You were supposed to be doing your own work but you could still hear what was going on. I think that that was a--I'm sure that we felt less stratified by being grouped that way. And we would have our music together, all three or four grades, singing the same things.

ASIDE FROM MUSIC, WAS THERE ANY INTERACTION IN THE CLASSROOM BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS? WAS THERE TUTORING?

Oh, yeah. I can remember that she had a little playhouse in the back of the first grade room and she would send one of the better students back with one of the ones who couldn't read as well and let the poorer child read--they would have a little tutoring session back in the playhouse. And it was kind of an honor to be asked to be the one to go back and do this. There was some of this back and forth. The teacher set it up--peer help, an older one helping a younger one.

IT SOUNDS LIKE BEING ABLE TO LOOK FORWARD TO THE WORK YOU WERE GOING TO DO AND LOOKING BACK ON THE WORK YOU HAD DONE, THAT MAY HAVE GIVEN YOU A SENSE OF SOMETHING THAT OTHER CHILDREN DIDN'T GET.

I think it's very possible. I know that we got that. I know that with my own children, I had to do a lot of home-schooling overseas and that worked with them as well because, you know, Heidi would be working on her algebra and Krista would be doing her math and they'd be sitting at the dining room table together. It made it all kind of do-able. You know, it's something like, "My sister's doing this; I'll soon get to it." It wasn't so stratified and isolated. You weren't learning something in isolation; it was all part of a continuum. And it also made you aspire, at least it had this effect on me, I can't speak for everybody in the school. But when you would hear someone learning a poem and then reciting it--that was one thing we would do, learn poetry--and you would hear an older child reciting a poem and you thought, wow, they can really do something neat! Or doing a written assignment or reading creative work aloud or drawing. I can just remember seeing this other girl--a fourth-grader when I was in the first grade--she drew an Indian maiden with a pearl necklace and, I don't know, just something about that--I was so impressed. It would give me ideas. You know, I probably drew Indian maidens with diamond--I mean pearl--necklaces for years! But it was a way I think of encouraging, passing on.

WERE THERE OTHER CHURCH ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL THAT WOULD HAVE BROUGHT DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS TOGETHER?

Well, it seems like we did things as families, for one thing. I'm trying to think if the church, when I was very little . . . a lot of the children's activities were

connected with the school and you would have a Christmas program where everyone had worked together and you presented this big program. In the summer we had summer bible school and it would go for several weeks and the adults and kids would work together on that. I'm trying to think if the church had other activities. Well, this would be youth. When we were teenagers we had a weekly meeting of the youth group which was called the literary society and there it was mostly, though, young people so that would not fit into that. We would have an adult sponsor or mentor there.

MOSTLY YOUNG PEOPLE BUT THEY WOULD BE OF DIFFERENT AGES.

Oh, yes. And it could be people still in high school and also those out of high school so there was a combination there. And you would have programs and fun events and progressive suppers and things like that that you would work on together. Family groupings within the church--there was a lot of back and forth there. I was related to different segments of people. You would have, for example, a Yoder family get-together and you would relate to all those uncles and aunts and cousins. And then we'd get together with all my mother's relatives and there you would interact with the adults and kids. So there was a lot of family groupings going on. The family that grew up in this house was especially strong on group activities. They even had a newspaper that they published called "Oakwood Breezes" that is now just hilarious to read. I mean it was 70 years ago, 65, 70 years ago. We still have copies of them. They have all the latest fashions and make jokes about somebody, talk about new boys who had moved into the community (this would be the girls) and have funny little news stories and weather and advertisements what people were doing and selling--just hilarious.

JUST WITHIN THE . . .

Within the family itself, of course they drew in their friends and older relatives as well. They were part of the stories but it was the kids who did it.

[end of second interview]

## APPENDIX D: JACKIE

HOW DID YOU HAPPEN TO ATTEND THE MENNONITE CHURCH?

Okay, it went back to when our son was in the third grade--in a public school--and we realized it would be an appropriate time for him to go to a small Christian school or at least a small private school. We put, we stressed the private rather than Christian at that time. And, um, I was working and there was a friend, an acquaintance at work that was a member of Warwick River and he suggested that I check out their school. And when my husband and I did, we were impressed with the principal, Mable Nelson, and her communication with us at that time. So we put Bruce from public school into Warwick River. So we came in, basically, through a school and as our lives changed and time went on, we became more interested in the church. But that is the answer to your question: we came in through the school. We found the school through an acquaintance where I was working.

WHEN DID THAT HAPPEN?

Bruce will be twenty-one Tuesday. Third grade would have been--about 1979, maybe?

THAT'S INTERESTING. I HEAR THAT THAT'S REALLY BEEN A GREAT SCHOOL OVER THE YEARS. HAS THAT BEEN YOUR EXPERIENCE?

It's a beautiful school--especially for the early grades--and that's when Bruce was there, third through fifth. Small classrooms, a lot of individual attention and a lot of support from the faculty to us. So, we had *no* complaints about the school.

WAS THE CURRICULUM CHRISTIAN?

They had religious courses and, of course, chapel. So it was religious-based school. And, of course, Mable Nelson was very conservative so Bruce had some problems with his, um--what was it? One of the games he was playing . . . "Dungeons and Dragons". He liked the little figures of the Dungeons and Dragons, and he had no idea of any other implication. He liked the little lead miniatures. And he was kind of upset that they were all demon and he didn't know whether he should keep them or not because of the teachings. And I was much more liberal and said, "They're okay. They're all right. They're kind of science-fictiony-looking." And so

there was a strong influence, very conservative influence and we basically balanced that at home. I'm not totally extreme at all. I think children have to at least be raised in an environment where they can handle things. I don't think you can isolate children from society and I think the real small, totally isolated Christian world to me is unreal. I mean, you have to be strong in your faith but you have to know what you're up against. So, I didn't go for that "Everything is bad."

DID YOU FIND THAT, ONCE YOU STARTED ATTENDING THE CHURCH, THAT VIEW HAD A PLACE IN THE CHURCH?

My view? Or the church's view?

YOUR APPROACH TO YOUR FAITH AND LIFE.

I think there's a lot more liberal feelings but people don't talk about them. They're not as opened. Especially those that were raised in the church that are still in the church. A lot have left the church as they became more professional, and maybe more liberal--perhaps felt they were going against their early training and would feel more comfortable in other denominations. And I was in a more liberal denomination and I went to a conservative church but I think there's a place for openness--and today there has to be. The world's moving too fast. So I personally feel that you should be open, be able to talk about things and have a moderation rather than put yourself in such a strict path that you're almost bound to fail. And then you get very discouraged and feel very guilty and a lot of people end up just dropping out of the church.

WELL THEN, WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE SOME OF THE ASPECTS OF THIS CONGREGATION THAT PLEASE YOU THE MOST?

Sense of community. Support and, basically, they accept you for where you're at. [smiles] Maybe it isn't strict enough today, for peoples' feelings but, for me, they're open, forgiving and loving enough that that's where I would feel comfortable. I'm sure there are other Mennonite churches that are very conservative. I was divorced--of course, I was divorced before entering the church--so I don't think that was a problem. I think today . . . well, it *could* have been a problem but they *accepted* me. Today I think it's still hard for the congregation to accept people *in* the church who are divorcing, and then staying *in* the church or trying to keep them *in*

the church. But it was easier for them to accept me because I was divorced not as a Mennonite. I was divorced in another denomination. So, ah, but I still, I found no problem that I ever heard of where they didn't accept as a member, having been from a different background . . . though I've been told that, many years ago, they would have had problems.

WHAT DENOMINATION DID YOU GO TO?

Episcopal.

THAT WAS THE CHURCH YOU GREW UP IN?

Correct. Baptized, confirmed, married.

ARE YOU NOW A MEMBER OF THE MENNONITE CHURCH?

Yes, yes.

WERE YOU BAPTIZED?

Yes, rebaptized as an adult. Not that it was . . . my infant baptism was not disputed, it was just that I chose to be rebaptized. That was probably about '82, I think. I could look that up. I should know it. It's been awhile. Maybe it was '85. [Laughs] Time is going faster than I like to admit [Laughs]. It's just, I mean, wow!

WHAT IS THE SERVICE LIKE?

Well, there's the sprinkling of water on your head, and the confession of sins and accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and, you know, basically the same things that any Christian, I suppose, would want to admit. I had fought it, basically, for a while because I didn't think I was ready to join the church. And I was in a small house church, even, with our pastor and his wife. So it was a wonderful small networking of close personal friends and it just got to the point when even our pastor said, "Well, you know Jackie, you're ready. Just join!" [Laughs] And I was still fighting it because I was thinking, well, I won't be good enough, be perfect enough. And I really was an Episcopalian, by heart and by nature and by my whole family and it was a big decision to formally leave the church that al--it seemed like for generations had been Episcopalian. But I also guessed it was an act of faith and

doing something very independent. I remember before I joined, I went to the Episcopal church and met with the minister and [laughs] you know, almost hoping he would offer me something where I would not continue in the Mennonite Church. And I remember his telling me that there was a "friendly" Episcopalian church in Hampton and if I wanted to go there--I mean it was, you know, in Hampton! [Laughs] I thought, I don't need to go to Hampton to find a friendly church, I had it at Warwick River. I think that was the main thing, really. The Episcopal church was so formal and I had outgrown that. I had outgrown the coldness and the formalism and I know that my, many of my Episcopal friends will not like me for saying this. But more than any doctrine, I'm not a doctrine type person, really. It was just the sense of community and down-to-earthness, and people.

HOW IS THAT EXPRESSED?

Just a lot of eating together and talking, um, and not really condemning you if you miss a Sunday or if you don't do something, I mean, they're very willing for you to say, "No, I cannot do something." You don't feel the pressure of having to say "yes" to committees or . . . actually I'm not as involved as I could be if I gave more of myself. I think it's there. I know there are probably people who think it isn't there, that they don't feel as friendly or whatever. But, for me, any involvement I don't have is because I'm just not . . . as involved.

WHAT KINDS OF THING DO YOU DO NOW OR WOULD YOU DO, IF YOU HAD MORE TIME, IF YOU WERE GOING TO BE AS INVOLVED AS YOU THINK YOU COULD BE?

I think right now I don't want to . . . I'm really into grandchildren and family. And we as a family are going to church and I think that's the most I can offer right now. I'm not, I had been on the council, my husband is still on the council, I work in the nursery once in a cycle, volunteer. But as far as . . . I'm not musical so I'm not involved in singing. I don't want to teach Sunday school. I'm not equipped to handle that. And I have no boring free time. [Laughs] I think a lot of middle-aged people get involved in the church because their kids are raised and gone and it becomes a social life for them. With me, I have a lot of family around here that I didn't have. And I'm so--I don't want to say drained, but--fulfilled with family that I'm not feeling . . . I just don't have the time. If I didn't have the family to be care taking to myself, I would probably visit more of the shut-ins and do certainly nice things [laughs] that

I'm not doing now, I mean I'm not involved in that. It's not because I don't . . . I would like to be, if I had nothing else to do but I'm limited on energy and . . . I'm not doing it. I'm not really that proud of it but, on the other hand, I'm proud of what I'm doing for my family.

WELL, I THINK THAT'S INTERESTING. I WAS SORT OF, MORE THAN ANYTHING, TRYING TO GET AT WHAT SORTS OF THINGS THE CHURCH DOES DO, WHAT OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE.

A lot of care-taking for older people and people in need. I don't know whether it's as civic-minded. I think that's new for the church to become more of an activist type church in the community. I think Mennonites by nature have been so introverted, more self-contained, and today they can't be. I mean, the farms aren't here like they were, a lot of the Mennonites are scattered--they're not living nestled next to each other--and in order to subside, or to grow, rather . . . or to replace those of their own that they're losing by moving different places, they have to open up to the people. And of course that acceptance is what brought me, us, our family into the church. But I do think they had almost a low self esteem for that at first. I actually had a couple, well maybe more than a couple say that they were surprised that we would want them. *I* was surprised that they would want me and their feeling that we wouldn't want them. And I think they're having--you know, it's a new concept to open up and be involved in this city that's grown up around them. I think they're doing it. It's probably slower than some churches.

YOU SAY THEY'RE KIND OF INTROVERTED. HOW DOES THAT PLAY ITSELF OUT?

Well, I think years ago with their coverings and their fancy or, not fancy, but their different dress and that they were set apart--I mean, they had their own school and they had their high school and college in Harrisonburg. So they weren't thrown in with just the normal residents of this area. To keep a child away like that for generations or for so many years, I would think that they might think that they couldn't join in, they couldn't be a part of other things. So it's a mind thing. And all of a sudden you have the generation saying, "Hey, I don't want to wear the covering, I don't want to be so different." And it just takes a little while to blend. Now this has been years ago, before our time I'm sure, because it's only very few, if a handful, of older women that are wearing the hair covering, the head coverings.

DO YOU THINK THAT THAT KIND OF STYLE STILL EXITS?

Yes, I think that there are people that have moved from here to try to find a Mennonite community where it's more conservative and they're different . . . like the Amish, where you have your communities and you're "set off from the world." I have an analytical feeling on that which probably wouldn't be accepted [laughs] but I think a lot of people who are having problems with their identity and maybe their religious feelings, maybe the temptations, feel that if you move away and get back into the uniform, the dress, the hair covering and live in this closed little community, you'll have an identity and that you'll be okay. But I think that any problems that you have that would make you move there for that reason, you're going to still have. I would view it sometimes as an escape. I think you're a Mennonite from within; it doesn't matter what you have on. So, now if you want to move for your family or for some other reason that makes sense, but just to--there were some that I remember that rebelled at how liberal we were getting and they wanted to go somewhere. And there's a family now that I know that used to go to church that lives very close to the church but they don't go anywhere. They've become self-contained. They do their own education of their children. To me, I don't--personally, I think that's being stagnant. You know, you cannot isolate yourself in the type of world we live in. I don't, I don't, I myself don't respect that way of doing it. If they want to that's fine but I think they're missing something by just going a little ways in being members of the church and being supportive instead of withdrawing and saying, hey, you're not meeting our needs so we won't meet anyone's needs, except our own. That, to me, is very self-centered. But some people think that's Christian. I have some conflict with that. That to me is not what the main church is saying to me. First time I went to an annual meeting up in the mountains, I didn't know whether to wear shorts--I thought no, I can't wear shorts, you know, not slacks. So I took this summer skirt along and I felt, gee, am I going to look Mennonite enough? And I realized that there were people there looking just like I would have liked to have looked, with you know, maybe the longer shorts but, and I think now through the years since that happened you'll have many more and seeing less of the conservative dress and they're looking just like anyone else. And I think that's a transition for the church. And they're probably losing some of the ethnic Mennonites because of that, and gaining some new people. Am I saying too much? [Laughs]

NOT AT ALL!

[Laughs]

I FEEL SO LUCKY THAT I SEEM TO MEET THE [LAUGHS] REALLY ENGAGED PEOPLE.

[much laughter]

SO YOU ATTENDED THIS SORT OF CONFERENCE OR RETREAT?

Mm. I'm trying to think what that was. I guess the Virginia conference, annual meeting. It was in the summer, you know, way up in the mountains past Harrisonburg. And we were taken. We haven't been back there again. We're not ones to pick up and go real easily like a lot of the Mennonites do. And so I feel we're not offering as much as we could in supporting those other functions. WELL, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IS THE FOCUS OF THESE MEETINGS?
Business, budget, I'm sure and getting the whole conference, the Virginia conference together, breaking up for different meetings and lectures.

DO YOU DEBATE THINGS?

Oh, sure. Yes, they did and they still do. And it's fellowship as well, camp meeting and camp singing and food together, camping--you know, people go there and camp as well as stay in local Motels. But as far as currently, I'm not a good one to talk about what they're doing.

IT'S NOT ALWAYS EASY TO PICK UP--DO FAMILIES TAKE THEIR CHILDREN?

Yes they do. And by nature I wouldn't do that, no matter what church I was in. I'm just--it takes an act of Congress to get me to go on vacation!

[LAUGHS]

Much to my husband's dismay! I think I'm lazy is what it is!

YEAH, IT SORT OF REQUIRES A LOT OF PREPARATION.

Yeah, it's not always a vacation.

EXACTLY. YOU'RE NOT ALWAYS RELAXED.

I'm not a camper. I'd much rather go with hot water and nice linen.

WELL, I'VE ALREADY ASKED YOU WHAT YOU MOST APPRECIATE ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH THE CHURCH, AND MAYBE ALLUDED TO SOME THINGS THAT MAYBE YOU WEREN'T AS COMFORTABLE WITH, BUT ARE THERE ANY ASPECTS, SPECIFIC EXPERIENCES OR EVENTS THAT YOU REMEMBER THAT MADE YOU UNCOMFORTABLE, THAT SEEMED REALLY DIFFERENT FROM YOUR PAST EXPERIENCE?

I can't trigger in on any specific events. I had some problems during the Gulf War with the pacifist feeling and I had realized myself that I was a pacifist. I hate war. I just don't see where it gets you anywhere, it's tragic. And as a mother of sons as well as daughters I would, I mean I just don't know how you can see someone go off to war. But I didn't realize how much being patriotic was still in me. And so I was almost obsessed when that Gulf War was on, I mean, for America. And I thought, oh, wow, I'm really never going to make a good Mennonite because I was just really feeling that, you know, I don't want us to go down in flames and it's not that I wanted *them* to go down in flames but I was just real patriotic. And I know that I triggered in on my background, I mean, my grandfather on mother's side had been very patriotic, just, you know, with flags and marching or parades in Philadelphia when I was growing up. And on my father's side, when he died at thirty-five he was a lieutenant Colonel and my grandfather was a Colonel. So, even though my parents had been divorced and I wasn't an intimate part of that family, I was still--that was in me. And though I didn't like war, and I could accept being a pacifist when I joined the church, I was surprised at my own self when the first war that I can remember in many, many years came on with the Gulf War. And I thought, I really wanted, I was very pro-American and I was concerned that I would stand out in the church. I would not say much but I felt so patriotic and I thought, I'm not a good Mennonite because they don't want war, period, and a lot of them would never fly a flag because that was an outward symbol of being towards your government. And, yes, my tree has lots of flags!

[LAUGHS] [she was referring to decorative tree in her living room which is part of "early american" or "country" decor]

I can remember when I joined the church asking Truman, our pastor at that time, would it be all right if I still, you know, on Fourth of July, you know, if there was a flag if I put it out or went to see fire works and he said, "Of course! You know, we do that." But during the Gulf War, I was *amazed* at when I did talk about my feelings how many people said, in this war, they felt Saddam had to be stopped. And, you know, even then there was--not that they would get up and preach that, that this was not a necessary war or whatever, one-to-one there was a lot of support for how I was feeling.

EVEN AMONG PEOPLE WHO HAD GROWN UP . . . ?

Oh, yeah, ethnic . . . one in particular . . . she said that she was having problems herself because this man, I mean, he was doing horrible things and had we stopped Hitler earlier, you know? So I couldn't just say I wasn't accepted even then. So I feel that there's a lot of individualism though it may not be as openly discussed. But you don't openly discuss everything--or anything in a lot of places. It depends on one-to-one and who you're comfortable with 'cause I'm not going to open up to people unless I trust them because, why bother? You're just in for an argument.

BUT IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU DO DISCUSS, AS YOU SAY, ON A ONE-TO-ONE BASIS . . . WOULD YOU SAY, ONLY OUTSIDE OF CHURCH OR, JUST NOT IN A BIBLE STUDY SESSION?

We have house-church, we're a part of the group . . .

YES, EXPLAIN WHAT THAT IS.

. . . and that's a group of, right now we have three couples but generally it's four and two of us, two couples, and my husband and I are included in those two couples, have been in since the conception of that group. And we can discuss anything in that group. It's supposed to be a confidential, you know, discussion on anything you want. You're not supposed to discuss it outside of house-church. Now, I don't know whether that's always true. But, it's supposed--we're so relaxed that we can say anything. As far as these discussions, I could discuss something after church,

to the right person. I mean, I'm only comfortable around the right people. I'm nice and polite to other people but as far as saying how I feel, that would only bring out, that would only open up in me around the right person. Because if the person wasn't right, I wouldn't open up. I wouldn't see any reason to unless they asked me something. So, no. I can't think of anything negative. What was the other part of that question?

THAT WAS PRETTY MUCH IT.

There was something else I was feeling when you said that and I haven't said it.

MAYBE HOW THINGS ARE DIFFERENT FROM WHAT YOU WERE USED TO GROWING UP, IN A NEGATIVE WAY AS OPPOSED TO A POSITIVE WAY.

No, it's lost me. It'll probably come out.

OKAY. WELL, NOW THE HOUSE-CHURCH THING, I HADN'T HEARD ABOUT THAT BEFORE. IS THAT RELATIVELY RECENT? IT SOUNDS LIKE, IT'S REALLY FROM WHEN YOU STARTED.

We've had it since '79 or '80 or maybe early '80s.

DO YOU KNOW HOW THAT CAME ABOUT, WHEN THEY STARTED THAT?

Truman brought--the pastor wanted to, he hadn't been here very long at that time and wanted to get us as new-comers in, to bond in a small group and I think he realized that that would be the only way that I would fully accept the church because it was there where we had life histories, and where I shared, and when it was accepted in the house-church. That was the impetus to move on into the more general congregation. Because I was feeling very sensitive, having been a divorced person and knowing how their church stood on divorce but, of course, every church makes a stand that they don't like divorced people, or they don't want divorce, rather. But today I think churches have to deal with it; one out of every two, statistically, are being divorced. It's unfortunate but you can't turn your back.

WAS YOU HOUSE-CHURCH GROUP THE ONLY ONE OR THE FIRST ONE?

It was the start of several and through the years they have tapered off, for one reason or another and I think we're the only ones still functioning. And we've talked about starting them up again and urging it but, there again, it takes someone to organize that and a commitment and people are busy and it does mean another night out of the week. And unfortunately with the women who are working, unlike years ago in the Mennonite church, you've got people who in the evenings are tired and I don't think there is the commitment like there was for the small groups.

WOULD YOU SAY THEY'RE MADE UP MOSTLY OF NEW PEOPLE TO THE CHURCH?

No, it's a cross-section of whoever wants to be with each other in a small group and some of them are very biblical and ours was more social, just more of an encounter group where you can, you know, say what's been going on. We meet every other week. And I know what I thought of earlier, the negative aspect that I find a little difficult in the church and that is, having been an Episcopalian and by my nature, I find it difficult for me to literally believe everything in the Bible. And I don't think I could easily admit that, except to the right person. I'm just, um, I don't even think it matters like some people might. I have always been somewhat offended if I had a problem and I was quoted a scripture as an end-all. You know, just, "There it is, accept it and now let's go on," because I always found that I couldn't do that to someone else. When they want to talk, they don't want to be told . . . they don't want to be given a scripture for the answer right then, they want to work it through! And then, maybe, if you're really an in depth person it'll come out without you having to hide behind quotations. And no matter who is reading the Bible, there are so many different translations and what one person says is a *literal* meaning, another person will say, well, *this* is the literal meaning. And so you're squabbling about what the Bible means and I'm just feeling, it's the *love* underneath it all and the acceptance of people and I've never gotten hung up on the Bible says *don't* do this and the Bible says do this because, if you read far enough, you'll get--I mean, no matter what you're doing, it can be counteracted by somebody finding another scripture. So, I'm not biblically in touch like people who have been raised in the church and its been hammered into them. But I think there are fewer of those today. I am a more liberal person as far as even the Bible is concerned. So don't [laughs] delete that please! [laughs]

BUT IT SOUNDS LIKE THERE ARE SOME LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH, WELL, AT LEAST SOME PEOPLE YOU FEEL YOU CAN SAY THAT TO.

Well, even our pastor that brought us into the church, I mean, he wouldn't have preached it. But he realized that it doesn't matter. A lot of these things it's just how are you going to relate to people.

IS THIS A LAY MINISTER?

Who? That brought us in?

YEAH.

No, it was the pastor. The one before this one, the one that's there now.

THERE WOULD BE ONE PAID MINISTER AND THEN . . .

. . . Elders, who are very effective, I mean I think, wonderful bunch of people.

I THINK IN THE PAST, THEY HAD SOME OFFICIAL LAY MINISTERS WHO WERE UNPAID, MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH WHO HAD OFFICIAL RESPONSIBILITIES.

I think it was by lot, drawing straws, whatever. It's been only more recently that they have stressed the education and the actual ordination of ministers. It used to be just who was in the church and of course many years ago, when they all lived on farms, I mean, it was such a rural community and I guess it was just whoever had the gift of preaching would take the responsibility. Today, it's like any other church. They're into more the educated pastor but then they still, they don't assume the role like Catholic and Episcopal churches and some of the others, I mean, Tru-, I mean, Gordon, our present pastor, is *very* educated. He has a Ph.D. but he doesn't want to make the decisions. He's not the head of the church like in certain churches they stress the head.

THAT'S INTERESTING BECAUSE I WONDER HOW YOU SEE THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN THE CHURCH.

I think in our church here they're reacting very well because there are more educated people. In rural communities I don't know. But I know one of the first things that *appealed* to me, and I'm just remembering this, in the Mennonite church, is how *progressive* they were because one the early Sundays we went, they handed out things on wills. And I thought, gee, you know, that was unique and very appropriate. But I hadn't had that before. And, uh, I thought, considering Mennonites, what I thought Mennonites--there's a lot of written articles on sexuality and they're becoming much more progressive in their periodicals with some *very* interesting stories and I think even on the sexual issues that you would think they would not approach--yet. But they're, they're right on target. So they're a *lot* more open than what you may have thought and what I had thought of--Oh, Mennonite. Because, even when the friend at work told me to look into that school and I might even like the church, my feeling is, oh, no. They won't want me. They won't be open to it. And it's amazing. But the concept, the social concept of Mennonites is, what are they? And I think it goes back to the fact they were so self-contained at one time. They did their missionary work, they did their disaster work but they were the Mennonites doing it whereas the Episcopal church and all the other denominations were a lot more ecumenical at an earlier time. But they're moving right a long, I mean [laughs] I think.

THAT REMINDS ME ABOUT SOMETHING I READ IN, I GUESS, THE GOSPEL HERALD, ABOUT SOME EVENT IN A CONGREGATION IN PENNSYLVANIA WHERE THEY HAD DECIDED TO HAVE SORT OF AN OPEN MEETING WHERE VICTIMS OF ABUSE WOULD SORT OF AIR THEIR . . .

Uhum.

. . . THINGS THAT HAD HAPPENED TO THEM. I WONDERED IF ANYTHING EVEN REMOTELY LIKE THAT HAS HAPPENED HERE WHERE PEOPLE JUST SORT OF SPOKE ABOUT THESE *VERY* DIFFICULT, EMOTIONAL ISSUES TO TRY TO DEAL WITH THEM.

No, no. I don't remember it being in an opened . . . they talked about the military [breaths/sighs]--uhm, which is controversial in this area but, abuse? No, I would think that would be more district, or you know, the annual meeting, there may be something where you have more to pull from. But, um, I would think they may

have to deal with divorce or marital problems. I think that hasn't been as opened. I think you may pray for marriages in trouble but I don't think it's opened, you know, where you really deal with it hands on. I think it's a difficult-*that* part is difficult--clergymen don't have all the counseling. To me, I think every church should have a psychiatrist as the pastor. It should be one group therapy, congregation, but in reality, that's not true. I mean, it can't be. Elders are generally not equipped. They're very sensitive and they handle people's privacy. They're elders because they're well-liked and they're spiritual. But I think there are problems dealing in the real down to earth problems of marriages. You know, we're not . . . I don't know whether they need more training on that.

[I adjusted the mic and we talked about that for a moment]

I WONDER IF YOU THINK THAT MAYBE THIS HOME CHURCH WOULD BE THE ALTERNATIVE TO SORT OF MASS MEETINGS OF . . .

That's really basically the concept of house church. And it . . . my husband is supposed to be, he's either the head of it or on the committee to review it and it's just one of those things that's gotten on the back burner. We don't have a minister right now that is pushing it. Like Truman, the minister before, *pushed* small groups. And so people rallied around that. Gordon, I don't believe--I think he would support it, but he's not as into it. And that may make a difference.

WAS THIS TRUMAN BRUNK, JR.?

Yes.

DID HE GO TO ANOTHER DENOMINATION?

No, same denomination but back to his . . .

NO, I MEANT, CONGREGATION.

Right. Yes, congregation. He had been raised here and had come back here. Ah, but it was more difficult to come, to return home and pastor relatives and an old community. So he went back to Pennsylvania and I would assume--they're very liberal--perhaps the congregation in Pennsylvania is much more liberal than here.

Though we're much more liberal than . . . some places.

I, UM, CERTAINLY DON'T WANT TO GET TO THE LEVEL OF GOSSIP BUT I'M INTERESTED IN HIM BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF HIS FAMILY IN THE STARTING OF THIS COLONY . .

His father . . .

. . . AND GRANDFATHER, REALLY. YEAH, IT WAS HIS GRANDFATHER WHO WAS NOT ONLY BISHOP HERE BUT VERY INFLUENTIAL IN THE CHURCH IN VIRGINIA CONFERENCE. BASICALLY, SO MUCH HAS CHANGED AND THAT'S REFLECTED IN THE FAMILY AS WELL AS . . . TO HEAR THAT TRUMAN JR. . . . [END OF SIDE ONE] I GUESS YOU MUST HAVE HAD EXPOSURE TO HIM THROUGH THIS HOME CHURCH THING.

Oh, yeah. We were in his house church.

SO YOU REALLY GOT A CHANCE TO KNOW HIM . . .

. . . We knew him real well. Are you asking me something specific? I mean, I don't mind answering it if you just tell me what you want to know.

WELL, YOU'VE ALREADY INDICATED QUITE A BIT: HE PUSHED THIS HOUSE CHURCH APPROACH. DO YOU GET THE SENSE THAT HE LEARNED ABOUT THAT THROUGH THE MENNONITE CHURCH?

Through the Mennonite church and through where he had formally been, I think, through the years.

HAD HE BEEN PASTOR SOME WHERE ELSE FOR A WHILE?

He had also been chaplain at Eastern Mennonite College, I believe, at Harrisonburg.

IS THAT WHERE HE GRADUATED FROM?

I don't know where he graduated from. He probably did. He was chaplain

there, I think, before he came--no, he had gone to Akron. I don't know where he was--I think he was in Pennsylvania when he came here. And had been before that in Harrisonburg, I'm not sure. I mean I have some real strong *feelings* about that, that time for me, for us. But, I don't know if you want to hear that.

IT JUST SOUNDS LIKE HE REPRESENTED THE CHURCH TO YOU, THAT HE WAS THE ONE WHO ENCOURAGED YOU TO BELIEVE THAT YOU COULD BE A MEMBER.

He was *very* instrumental and we had just started to come and the reason why: after Bruce was in school, we went to visit Lancaster in the Amish country and just as a vacation. And my husband thought it was so nice up there and Bruce had had such a good experience in school, he was going to start to go to Warwick River and I said, I laughed at him. I said, "Well you're going to go without me because I don't believe you're going." And he went for a couple of Sundays or three, maybe more, *alone*. And, I mean, [my husband] had not been interested in a . . . he was a Christian and raised in the church but he didn't want to belong to an organized church when we were married. But anyway, he started going up to church alone and I was appalled that he would get up and go to church. So then I realized that I needed to support him and so we would go and sit in the very back--of course, now we're way down front--but Truman, then, came somewhere around that time. In fact, we may have started coming before he came. And then, we filled out a card and he grabbed hold of the card and called us up. And then, so he really became instrumental in locking us into the church by a real personal contact. And then we got, formed the house church, which was instrumental because it gave me a chance to see very down-to-earth people who would be accepting of my case history, you know, my background [smiles]. And it was *very* meaningful to us and it was of course Truman who baptized me. Um . . . the sad, the negative part of that was that, they had built this house, this was their home [indicates her home, where we were sitting during the interview]. We bought this from them.

OH, *REALLY*?

Yes. And this was to be their retirement home. And they became very disenchanted with being back here, I guess, with some of the family problems and just maybe being too involved, knowing too many things, too intimate--or maybe just wanting too many changes too quickly. Because they *had* been very liberal and very,

more cosmopolitan and been away many years and came back and there were a lot of people here that said, Whoa! We've been here, we haven't left, we know how fast we want to move. And I think there were some conflicts there and a lot of family where it was hard to keep dynamics smooth, at least for their personalities. They were a very dynamic people. And Betty, his wife, was . . . uh . . . ah, not the subservient [smiles] Mennonite wife that I think had been in the past. So there were some conflicts and we went through all that with them in house church. But when they moved, as I said, we were able to buy this house but, ah, I think the sad part for me is that when they left, I think they were paranoid enough that maybe they thought *everyone* had turned against them, [raises voice] or *whatever*, there was *some* problem there. [takes deep breath] And, so they come back to town and they see family and then they leave again. And, um, there has not been any contact with us. And we as new Mennonites could have *easily* left the church. I'll tell you this for whatever it's worth in your report. We could have *easily* left the church and there were people who he had pulled in due to his *dynamic* personality, and I mean, he was, he was just a big teddy bear that was a wonderful, down-to-earth preacher, did *not* preach a lot from the Bible. Just very human stories which I responded to. Our present pastor is much more a Biblical scholar, he could easily be a lecturer in a college and I [smiles] probably kidded him about that . . .

[LAUGHS]

. . . So we've gone on, Lisa. And, you know, very solemnly ingrained in the church and through us we have brought in the rest of our family. I mean, Bruce was baptized and Linda, my daughter, and her husband and they have two children. My other daughter has joined the church and she and her husband have just adopted [an infant son] who's in back. So we're all, you know, we all stayed in the church . . .

[the recorder was turned off for a while at Jackie's request]

. . . And our pastor today is just what we need in that he's very strong, you know, he's not going to let little . . . There's a lot of family here and evidently a lot of old hurts, a lot of *old* type, you know, the church, a lot of the people who are still there, have been here always and it's like any family--there's squabbling. And maybe a lot of business dealings. I don't know anything about this, I've just heard that there's some old hurts and some old things, you know. But, um, whereas I think newer congregations don't have the clutter. They come in and they're kind of on fire.

They don't have the history to deal with and this church definitely is more unique than a lot of other churches which have been built up around here because it's an old church with old people that have always lived here. . . Have I gotten off the path? Did I answer your question?

[end of interview]

## APPENDIX E: THE PASTOR

[I asked him about the question of individuals in the military seeking membership in the church]

WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT THE CHURCH'S POSITION AS IT TURNED OUT AFTER IT WAS--WAS IT DEBATED IN THE CONGREGATION? HOW DID THIS COME ABOUT?

Yes, there was a study committee chosen, representing five or six churches. They were involved in producing the document and then when the final draft was completed that was taken to the churches, all the Mennonite churches in the Tidewater area. And then each local congregation could discuss the question: first of all, what was meant, discuss any kind of concerns and also finally make some comment as to whether they approved or disapproved. So, it was finally--finally, it has to be the congregation that takes responsibility for the paper.

RIGHT. I'M INTERESTED IN THE KINDS OF CONCERNS DIFFERENT PEOPLE MIGHT HAVE HAD. NOT INDIVIDUALS SO MUCH AS THE DIFFERENT TAKES ON THE SITUATION, HOW THEY FELT THIS CONTROVERSY AFFECTED FAITH.

Okay, what it . . . *usually* revolved around was the, uh, issue of being a peace church. Mennonites have for centuries, since the reformation, committed themselves to peace and non-violence and that is perhaps the most unique feature of the Mennonite church is that it so openly and consistently seeks to promote peace and also with that emphasize a love even for *enemies*, as Jesus did. And so the questions in the discussions then usually centered around the idea, if we now allow others who have a different persuasion into our churches will that not dilute initially and eventually then result in us losing our peace position, especially also our strong emphasis on peace and non-violence. So the concern usually, basically alluded to that question: what will happen to our historic peace emphasis? The further implications were, what about our youth? If now we bring in others that have a different perspective, a different viewpoint, will that not also confuse the children or young people that might be asking these kind of questions and in very significant times in their lives, will they then perhaps also finally consider, well, if everyone is acceptable or if one position is as good as another, then the peace thing is a take it or leave it kind of issue. And that was also a concern.

WELL, ONE THING I'VE LEARNED ABOUT IN DOING THIS PROJECT IS THAT THERE IS A SENSE I THINK OVERALL OF THE MENNONITE WITNESS TO THE WORLD. AND I GOT THE SENSE THAT MAYBE BY BEING HERE, MANY PEOPLE FELT THAT THEY WERE MAKING GOOD ON THAT. THAT BEING IN THE MIDST OF SORT OF A MILITARY COMPLEX, THE MENNONITE CHURCH COULD ACTUALLY BE PROVIDING A SERVICE, AN EXAMPLE OF NON-VIOLENCE. IS THAT A CONCERN OR A FEELING AMONG THE MENNONITES?

I think we Mennonites feel we have another viewpoint entrusted to us by God in an environment where violence and militarism so often seems to be the going, prevailing kind of sense. We feel this is an alternative, another viewpoint or another position for the Christian. However, I don't think Mennonites chose this very deliberately. It just happened. I think when Mennonites first moved into the area, what is it, about eighty or ninety years ago, ah, they just came to look for good farm land. And so as time evolved, it just happened. But, and now, the Mennonite churches are asking themselves, how can we most effectively, most faithfully promote Jesus' message of peace in an environment that is militaristic?

I WONDER IF THAT WAS A FACTOR IN SOME PEOPLE DECIDING TO STAY HERE WHEREAS OTHER PEOPLE HAVE LEFT TO FIND A PLACE WHERE THEY CAN FARM AGAIN, PERHAPS AVOID THE URBAN . . . POSSIBLE COMPROMISES AND THAT KIND OF THING.

I'd like to think that there would be some, however, I could not very passionately defend that position. I think Mennonites historically have been content to live and let live, kind of. We've asked others to accept us the way we were and we have kind of let others be who they are and rather peacefully coexist rather than challenge each others' viewpoints. However, there are aspects of the Mennonite church, the larger Mennonite church, where there are some people very, very consciously involved in peace education and peace protests sometimes peace marches but my sense is in this community, in this area, Mennonites are not really pushing it in that fashion. Rather, by education, by example, by other more peaceful means, we're trying to share peaceful message--I don't think anybody has very deliberately decided, I'm going to be a peace witness as such, aggressively or very deliberately as such--I'm not aware of it.

WELL, WOULD PERHAPS THE DECISION TO BE OPEN TO MEMBERSHIP, INCLUDING, MAYBE ESPECIALLY, PEOPLE IN THE MILITARY COMPLEX, BE A PART OF THE DETERMINATION TO--WELL, MAYBE I SHOULDN'T PUT IT THAT WAY [LAUGHS]--YOU ANSWERED MY QUESTION THAT WAY, BUT ANYWAY, COULD A PEACE WITNESS BE PART OF WANTING TO BE OPEN TO ALL MEMBERSHIP, WHO SEEM OPEN TO YOUR MESSAGE?

I think so. I think Jesus *constantly* exemplified that even though there were people that in many respects were outcasts or sinners-- let's just simply call them sinners--Jesus always respectfully addressed their needs and related to them in a very gentle, at least usually in a very gentle, peaceful way. I think that for us is also a desire, even though--I said this earlier before the tape was on--for military members, for members of the military to step inside our doors, we are careful, really quite consciously careful that we will not immediately bombard them with all the things that we think they are wrong in and how much better our message is and how much better peace is than war.

We are trying to be, especially here at Huntington, we're trying to be very respectful of other points of view. That's why we can consider also military members in our churches. If there's an understanding that they will respect us for what we believe and what we preach and we will respect them for who they are, even though it means they are members of the military. So there's that mutual concern and love and respect that we must promote.

WELL, [phone rings]

Excuse me. [pause tape]

OKAY, I WAS GOING TO ASK YOU, YOU MENTIONED THAT ONE CONCERN WHEN YOU WERE DEBATING THIS WAS, WOULD OUR QUESTIONING OR DEBATING A PEACE POSITION IN ANY WAY CONFUSE CHILDREN WHO ARE FINDING OUT WHAT BEING MENNONITE MEANS, WHETHER OR NOT THEY ARE GOING TO CHOOSE TO JOIN THE CHURCH. I WONDERED IF PEOPLE FELT THAT THERE WAS ANY CHANCE OF UNDERMINING FAITH BY QUESTIONING THIS CENTRAL TENANT OR POSITION OF THE CHURCH?

That is a pertinent question. Children, youth, all of us constantly do ask ourselves, is there a reality to faith or are we just kind of fooling ourselves if we say that the Bible or Jesus' teachings are significant for today? Are we--as some critics have said religion is just kind of for weak people or it's an opiate of the people as Marxists say. So faith is constantly a questions that we have to process personally. Is it real or is it just make-believe? So, *but* I am of the opinion--and this has come to me in last dozen years or so--questioning faith, examining your faith, examining and closely scrutinizing what you believe and why, is a healthy process. So, when

some people are alarmed if you ask the wrong questions, that in itself is unfortunate. I think we can become stronger, ourselves as well as our youth, if we constantly examine our faith positions.

And so for anyone in the Mennonite church simply to accept the peace issue, the peace teaching because it's a Mennonite teaching, that is superficial, that is weak. If we can genuinely be pacifists because we believe Jesus preached peace and because he lived peace and as such we want to live like Jesus did and that means being peacemakers, then if that becomes the personal conviction, that's much stronger than simply just accepting it because I'm part of the Mennonite church. And so periodically, at least at times when kids or young people can handle it, looking closely at these issues is healthy. So, it *may* upset some but in the longer run it is a healthy process which we should be doing in all areas of faith and belief.

THAT'S REALLY INTERESTING. I WONDER IF, FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE, WELL, FIRST OF ALL, YOU DIDN'T GROW UP IN THIS COMMUNITY.

That's right.

WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

I'm a Canadian. I'm from near Winnipeg, Manitoba.

A LOT OF MENNONITES IN CANADA.

That's correct.

WAS IT SORT OF A MORE TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD OR COMMUNITY?

When I grew up, in our school, from first grade right through high school, I would estimate that the students in our school were 90% from Mennonite homes. And so most people living in the community, again, 75 or 80% of the people living in the community would have attended the Mennonite church. So I lived in a very sheltered Mennonite environment.

WAS THE MENNONITE SCHOOL SOMEWHAT LIKE WHAT THEY HAVE HERE?

It was a public school system but the teachers and students were, are Mennonites, almost all Mennonites so even though we had to abide by the state rules and guidelines, we could interpret them as we chose, as our teachers chose.

I SUPPOSE THAT'S THE WAY IT WAS HERE BEFORE THEY STARTED

THE CHURCH SCHOOL. I'VE HEARD THAT FOR A WHILE THERE WERE QUITE A FEW MENNONITE KIDS IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

That's probably true.

WELL, I'M INTERESTED BECAUSE I'VE GOTTEN THE IMPRESSION FROM READING THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH THAT FROM AN EARLY TIME, AND I'M NOT SO SURE HOW MUCH AS TIME WENT ON, THERE WAS A VERY STRONG EMPHASIS ON CHOOSING MEMBERSHIP AND PROVIDING AN ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH CHILDREN OF MENNONITES WOULD BE ACTIVELY OR CONSCIOUSLY INVOLVED IN CHOOSING WHETHER OR NOT TO BE BAPTIZED THEMSELVES. THAT IT WOULDN'T JUST BE AN AUTOMATIC, SORT OF SOMETHING TAKEN FOR GRANTED THAT THESE PEOPLE WHO GREW UP IN THE CHURCH WOULD JOIN IT THEMSELVES. THEY WANTED PEOPLE TO CHOOSE THAT COMMITMENT.

Mmhm.

I WONDERED HOW AWARE OR HOW CONSCIOUSLY THAT HAS BEEN CULTIVATED IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY AND WHETHER THE VIEW YOU JUST ARTICULATED WOULD SORT OF BE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MENNONITE CHURCH TODAY OR IN THE LAST FEW YEARS?

The view I articulated on . . .

ABOUT EXAMINING YOUR REASONS FOR FAITH . . .

Oh, okay.

. . . AND NOT TAKING IT FOR GRANTED.

Well, naturally. I think it's pretty much across the board. Parents generally want their children to be what they are in different facets of life, including religious conviction. So that's kind of a general standard reality. However, as you recall Mennonite history and Anabaptist history, the issue initially in the 16th century that set us apart from the other church traditions was our insistence that to become a member of the church, of the faith community, you had to be, it had to be an adult, personal decision. All the other church traditions baptized infants. Anabaptists said, no, this has to be a personal conscious choice to become a follower of Jesus and then, with that to--and, baptism then represented that outward testimony that the individual then was ready to, to be committed to the way of Jesus' teachings. So that initially was extremely significant in terms of what it means to be Anabaptist or Mennonite. Now I think throughout our history, we have sought to retain that emphasis. That, when you are baptized, you do that as a responsible individual, that

this is not simply doing it because your parents were Mennonite or because your parents want you to be baptized. It's taught that the person, the individual person makes this very conscious choice.

So you ask how successful have we been in the Mennonite church in retaining a clear conviction on personal decision. That's a matter, a question open to debate but I think in general Mennonites still like to think that we teach our children that you have to decide and this has to be a personal reality in your heart and life that you want to follow Jesus as he, as we find him in the Scriptures. So, I think there's still a significant degree of, ah, significance there in those decisions that our children and youth make. And so, in *my* background, it's a little different here, but in my background we discouraged children from being baptized before 14 or 15. Here it's a little younger and might be questioned, can a 12-year-old make a responsible, conscious decision on such an important issue? But here they would say, yes, a 12-year-old is personally responsible so that's about the general age when baptism here takes place: 12, 13, 14.

I WONDER ABOUT WHAT MIGHT GO THROUGH THE MIND OF SOMEONE WHO'S TRYING TO MAKE THAT DECISION. DO YOU GET THE SENSE THAT MAYBE AT THAT YOUNGER AGE THERE IS THE PEER PRESSURE THAT KIDS EXPERIENCE IN OTHER ASPECTS OF THEIR LIVES?

That can happen in larger churches. I don't think that is necessarily the case here, in a church like ours that is smaller and most Mennonite churches here are rather on the small side. The peer pressure I think is more towards the other way, that influences that, especially those who go to public schools and are involved in other community activities where it's usually not with Mennonites and have other involvements, wherever they might be, the peer pressure would often be in the other direction. And so I believe for a young person to decide to become a member of the church, identify with what it means to be a member of a Mennonite church, that is fairly genuine, honest desire to do what Mennonites teach, follow Jesus in daily life.

WELL, I'VE LEARNED A LITTLE BIT ABOUT WHAT TAKING THAT KIND OF STAND, IN THE FACE OF A SOCIETY THAT DOESN'T SUPPORT IT AND OFTEN TENDS TO COUNTERACT IT--THE PEACE POSITION--HOW THAT AFFECTS ONE'S PERSONALITY IN GENERAL. DO YOU SEE IT AS FORMING SORT OF A PERSONALITY THAT IS COMFORTABLE WITH BEING A LITTLE DIFFERENT?

I think again that we could not generalize on that. I think that would differ with different people. Some individuals, children, young people, kind of have the strength to be different and to stand up for what they believe, others suffer through doing that. And so, I think Mennonite kids have the same pressures as anybody else. If it's a little different than the norm, if it's [different from] what kids at school stand

for, it takes a lot of courage to be different and so, for some it's okay, for others, uh, they don't do it as openly as would be nice. I--Mennonite kids or Mennonites or all of us are very human, very, many of the same traits and characteristics of individuals everywhere. We wrestle with the same things. So I hesitate to kind of put Mennonites on a pedestal and be better or special. [phone rang--paused tape]

WELL, I WAS THINKING ABOUT IS WHETHER, FIRST OF ALL, SORT OF STANDING UP TO MAYBE BEING DIFFERENT IN COMPARISON TO THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE SOCIETY, WHETHER THAT FORMS AN INDEPENDENT FRAME OF MIND. AND, IF SO, HOW DOES THAT AFFECT RELATIONS INSIDE THE CHURCH IF YOU HAVE A BUNCH OF SORT OF INDEPENDENT PEOPLE? [LAUGHS]

That is a *very* interesting question. I don't know if I've ever considered that question. It is true, if you study the history of the Mennonite church, that there have been a lot of splits, where, as you are now touching on, people are very independent. They have in the past, it's not as much a present phenomenon, they say what I believe, I believe strongly and if you don't believe the way I believe, well then you . . . then I'll separate, you do your thing and I'll do mine. And as a result, as you probably know, there are many, many different kinds of Mennonites and different branches of the Mennonite church. So possibly, as you are suggesting, that independence, though it has some strengths, it's also the reason why some of these negative characteristics have developed. I, ah, other than that, I don't know.

I . . . again, believe that Mennonites are very much like other people, though the emphasis on a personal conviction is always there and perhaps that has led to independence but, I can't give you a very good answer, specifically how that would then eventually demonstrate itself in congregational life. I don't know. We do have many people with independent minds but we also have, we also have a strong emphasis, though, Lisa, on congregational decision-making. And so even though there may be an independence developed with a, this idea of being separate or different, there also--our theology does teach that we together want to discern God's will. And so, we are, the church is a community. We are a family. We are the body of Christ and so the body of Christ is not to be separate and individualistic and insisting on "my way". It is supposed to be an accommodation of different ideas and then together, coming to consensus. So hopefully, that other, that other approach also kind of mitigates this individualistic track, trend. So community means family. We are brothers and sisters in the faith and that means that we love and appreciate each other in very, uh, practical ways.

THAT MAKES ME THINK OF A COUPLE OF THINGS THAT HAVE REALLY STRUCK ME WHENEVER I SIT IN ON A SERVICE--REALLY, ANY OF THE CONGREGATIONS. FIRST OF ALL, I REALLY HAVE BEEN IMPRESSED BY THE SHARING TIMES AND THE DIFFERENT WAYS THAT THE CONGREGATIONS FOSTER THAT BY PROVIDING EVEN SOME MODERN

CONVENIENCES TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR PEOPLE TO HEAR EACH OTHER AND EVEN TAKING NOTES TO BE ABLE TO REVIEW WHAT PEOPLE HAVE SHARED THAT WEEK OR THE FOLLOWING WEEK. .

Umhm.

AND IT SEEMED LIKE THAT MEANT A LOT TO EVERYBODY INVOLVED: TO KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON WITH EACH OTHER . . .

Umhm.

. . . ON A GROUP BASIS INSTEAD OF JUST COUNTING ON MAYBE SEEING EACH OTHER AFTER SERVICES AND EXCHANGING THAT INFORMATION OR WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE. IS THAT NEW OR UNUSUAL OR HOW--WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF THAT KIND OF SHARING?

Well, as I tried to say earlier, ah, we consider ourselves--the church is meant to be a very close community of brothers and sisters. As such, as the scripture also teaches, we are to identify with the needs of each other. As Romans says, "Weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice." Also other parts of scripture: Acts describe how there was even mutual financial sharing. We don't do it quite the way it's outlined there but we do consider ourselves to be accountable and responsible one to another, even financially if the need is there. So we seek to cultivate a deep relationships within the family of faith. As such, if then somebody gets up and says well, I had this difficult week, my parents are sick or I lost my job or [end of side one] . . . or whatever the personal concern or burden is at that point. That is not that, only that, individual's concern or burden, that becomes the burden of the whole group. And so it is shared Sunday morning, we pray for it then but hopefully we also take that with us and pray or address the need in other ways. If there are other concerns, surely we want to be empathetic and supportive however we can. So that is a very central part of the Mennonite church as well: community of faith. And the sharing time is only one way of more effectively being aware of what is going on in each other's lives.

THE WAY IT'S PRACTICED NOW--HOW DOES THAT COMPARE WITH, AT LEAST WHAT YOU GREW UP WITH AND HOW HAS THAT CHANGED OVER TIME?

Okay, that is a very good question because I grew up and also when you think of the colony here that, uh, that principle was much more demonstrated or practiced within a close, communal life that, as you say, the colony here had kind of its, at least, unwritten boundaries where everybody within was Mennonite and they helped each other out in their farm work and their social life was within the community and

that was also kind of my experience where the whole community, we were all predominantly Mennonite. And so all our activities were in very close alignment. So whether it was social, whether it was church, whether it was education, whatever it was, we always had our own, we were doing things with our own people and so were very much aware of who was hurting or who was celebrating and so we could enter into community life that way. Because physically, geographically, we were together.

Now in modern life, the way it is with people working at many different locations and professions and living in different parts of the city and where much of your life does not include other Mennonites, we have to find other ways of promoting and retaining that sense of community. So it's happening now more within the context, as you saw, of the Sunday morning sharing time. Many times we seek to have fellowship dinners or other events that emphasize social life. Then we also have what we call small group fellowship twice a month for the most part. We meet in smaller groups, three or four or five couples with some singles mixed in. And so we also promote community life in the living room of our homes by praying for one another and sharing experiences and being together and usually also studying some, either a scripture book, or some other devotional material. So we have to, we have had to redesign what community life is but we're working on it. [phone rang] Excuse me.

ANOTHER THING I'VE BEEN STRUCK BY IN THE CONGREGATION, THE SERVICES THAT I'VE ATTENDED: REALLY, IN EACH PLACE, I'VE NOTICED A SPECIAL FEELING OF ALL THE CONGREGATION FOR THE CHILDREN, A REAL TOLERANCE FOR SORT OF FIDGETING LITTLE KIDS AND [LAUGHS] A LITTLE NOISE OR A LITTLE MOVEMENT DOESN'T SEEM TO BOTHER PEOPLE, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER OR NOT . . . [difficult to hear at this point because of noise made by children playing just outside the room, ironically enough] . . . I WONDERED HOW THAT FITS IN WITH THE CHURCH AND THE FAITH.

Again I think we would like to trace that back to Jesus' attitude towards children. Jesus, uh, . . . [paused as children's laughter increased]. Will that be too loud for your machine? There are those kind of children [laughs]. Jesus several times, as it is recorded, held up children as really the pure examples of what it means to follow Christ. They're so pure, so innocent, so full of faith and just, Jesus blessed the children so openly. And so that, since we seek to follow Jesus' example, that would be a good basis for us to begin.

However, we've also been very, very pro-family. That, Mennonites have traditionally emphasized very, very strong family relationships and that's why you often see, and nowadays it's kind of sometimes almost a problem in that Mennonites have so many family times and family activities and family gatherings, others that aren't used to that they define this as being clannish, and just interested in themselves, excluding others. From that standpoint sometimes it kind of clashes with

our attempt of bringing others in. But family life is very, very important in the Mennonite context and so children are seen as a blessing where many times children are kind of, if not openly cursed, at least many people in society kind of consider them a nuisance or a bother or getting in the way of "my real goals". In the Mennonite church we try to emphasize that children are very precious, a real blessing and so we also strongly appose abortion and we just celebrate life and kids and family and therefore we just do not appreciate events where children are kind of pushed into the background and considered to be in the way. We rather like to include them as much as possible in the total church life.

I'M NOT EXACTLY CLEAR ON . . . I KNOW THAT SOME OF THE CONGREGATIONS HAVE NURSERIES AND I DON'T KNOW WHETHER MAYBE SOME OF THE KIDS ARE THERE DURING THE SERVICES . . .

Umhm.

. . . OR WHETHER THAT'S ONLY DURING BIBLE STUDY AND THEN THEY ALL COME INTO THE SANCTUARY. I JUST HAVEN'T BEEN AWARE ENOUGH TO KNOW.

I don't know what other churches are doing. What we do here is we--Sunday morning we have the nursery for kids 0-2 years old. There's somebody always taking care of them. And there's a full children's program of course from--in sunday school--from ages 3 up then as high as children go, including eventually youth and adults. That's Sunday morning. There's a full, they're taken care of. And then, yes, that's first hour. And then when we gather for the service, children are in the service as long as there are the preliminaries of singing, sharing and some of these things. Then for most Sundays we also then have children's church which includes kids I think, I'm guessing kind of, from four to eight or nine. They then leave when the sermon begins, they leave for more teaching on their own level, what we call children's church. So there's then again a special emphasis on children learning at their age level. I think that is an attempt at trying to make church life and the church service Sunday morning as much a delight for children as possible.

However, there are also those among us that would emphasize they'd like the kids to be in the church service throughout the morning because they need to learn to listen to real teaching as well, that comes in the sermon. So some parents say its a good time for them to begin to be taught the scriptural material on that level or on that basis. And then of course, Wednesday nights again we consider kind of family night at the church where there's a program right through again from age four through youth and adults.

SO ARE THOSE THE TWO MAIN GATHERINGS, SUNDAY MORNINGS AND WEDNESDAY NIGHTS? OR IS THERE SOMETHING ALSO ON SUNDAY NIGHTS?

No, the Sunday nights it use to be that we met every Sunday night in days gone by but that has kind of, again, as an accommodation just to life the way we find it in this modern twentieth century where we're all so busy we don't just, don't feel up to meeting on Sunday nights or is it that our needs are changing or is it rather also if we look at it more positively as an opportunity for families to spend that quality time together. So it depends on how you decide what really is the basis for it.

I THINK IT'S TRUE THAT THERE'S LESS TIME DURING THE WEEK TO SPEND EVEN THE EVENINGS TOGETHER. WELL, I WAS WONDERING, GIVEN THE FACT THAT THE CONGREGATION FUNCTIONS AS A UNIT WHEN THEY MAKE DECISIONS, WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE PASTOR?

We're struggling with that in the Mennonite church. That question, we have different answers to that question. And it's one that even I myself in the context of Huntington church here am not entirely clear on. On the one hand, our theology says we are all equals. The pastor is on no higher level than the parishioner. We are one body in faith and we have different functions but theoretically, in importance, the church member, his or her opinion is as important as mine. That theologically is what we teach and that's sometimes referred to as the priesthood of all believers. On the other hand, there are expectations, though, that the pastor should be a leader, that he or she should be involved in motivation, motivating people to new things, new ideas, new directions and also the leader is supposed to be right there at the forefront doing things that leaders do. So how to balance those two opposite emphases is not always easy. Some would say the pastor is trying to dominate. Others would say the pastor is not really leading the way he should. So it's a tension that we haven't quite settled.

DOES ONE'S BACKGROUND AS BEING AN ETHNIC MENNONITE OR A NEW MEMBER AFFECT THEIR FEELINGS ON THAT QUESTION AT ALL?

I think so. I think so. Mennonites, those that have grown up in the Mennonite church, and as you say they're sometimes called "ethnic Mennonites," they would more easily I think adapt or continue to be comfortable with the understanding that we make decisions as a congregation, we seek consensus, rather than that the pastor or small elite group makes important decisions. So, and so many times those from that, with that background, Mennonite background, would say we need to be together and unitedly come to a decision on this.

Others with different backgrounds, they have grown up where the pastor is a very dominant figure in church life, where that person is there to make most of the decisions, he is there every Sunday morning up in front leading, preaches almost all the time and just generally is . . . it just seems all of church life kind of revolves around the pastor. And if you have a very outgoing, very gifted, very charismatic type of leader, the church flourishes. When then another, weaker person comes in

or someone that doesn't quite have that gift of rallying people around him, then the church suffers. [begins to lower voice gradually] Generally speaking, Mennonites are more comfortable not with very central, gifted, one-pastor system. They like the congregational approach more. [voice returns to usual volume] But the challenge before us is how can you retain that principle of group unity and group decision-making with still some of the leadership qualifications that any group needs, including the church. That balance is what we're striving for.

WELL, ON THE ISSUE OF ETHNIC MENNONITES VERSUS NEW MEMBERS, OR NEWER MEMBERS, DO YOU KNOW GENERALLY OR EVEN SPECIFICALLY WHAT THE MAKEUP IS HERE IN THIS CONGREGATION?

In terms of percentages, I don't know specifically. I would guess we are about at 50/50. I think, that would be my guess right now. I don't know if anybody had studied that ever. However, someone made the observation just recently that in terms of involvement in significant committees within the church, there were the non-ethnics that were the chairmen of both, and there are three bodies within the church that are kind of leadership types. Of those three, two were led by newer Mennonites. And so, I thought that spoke well of Huntington in reaching out and incorporating and allowing new-comers to utilize their gifts and abilities and also be heard. It is not just the insiders that are making all the decisions, it is, we are incorporating newcomers into the church life. And that to me and to others here is a very positive reality for Huntington. Others of course are a little, ah, threatened if new ideas come in and new viewpoints and so on. The old, the old, ah, givens are kind of challenged in that respect. So, some feel it threatening, others are happy to see it happen.

WELL, I HEARD--I GUESS AT THAT POINT THEY WERE KIND OF CROWDED IN THE HISPANIC MENNONITE CHURCH IN THE D.C. AREA . . .

Okay, yes.

. . . THEY'RE JUST SORT OF LOOKING FOR A WAY TO EXPAND AND THE DIFFERENT CONGREGATIONS WERE PRAYING FOR THEIR FINDING THEIR WAY THROUGH THAT DIFFICULT--EVEN THOUGH IT WAS KIND OF A BLESSING THAT THEY WERE SO LARGE THAT THEY NEEDED TO EXPAND. TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, SINCE I'M UP IN WILLIAMSBURG, I DON'T REALLY KNOW TO WHAT EXTENT THERE IS SORT OF A MULTIETHNIC OR MULTIRACIAL COMMUNITY DOWN HERE BUT IS THERE ANY SENSE OF EITHER REACHING OUT ON AN INDIVIDUAL BASIS OR HAVING PEOPLE CHOOSE TO COME IN, MAYBE NOT ONLY HAVING A DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND BUT ALSO A DIFFERENT RACIAL OR ETHNIC BACKGROUND?

The Mennonite church generally is very consciously working at emphasizing that aspect of church life. There's an active mission program around the world as well as within our own, within this country and also within the local community. In this church, I would say we have only one black, unfortunately, I wish there were more. We have, I would guess, about half a dozen Hispanics and then there are a handful, maybe half a dozen as well, of the Southeast Asians, Cambodia, Vietnam, those people that came in as refugees a dozen or so years ago. So I wish we had a video here. I've loaned it to a person, another person that wanted to know about the Mennonite church. That video would give you some sense of how Mennonites are reaching out to other ethnic people. You may be aware of Calvary church in Hampton? That is a black Mennonite church.

OH, OKAY.

And then there's one in Richmond as well, a black, mostly black Mennonite church. There is, there is within a North American context, an Afro-American Mennonite Association, there's a Hispanic Mennonite Association, there's a native Indian, now I don't know what they call it, maybe North American Native Mennonites. And so at least those three ethnic groups have their own organization within the larger Mennonite church. And then there is now developing, and this is not quite to that degree but also, as I say, the Southeast Asian part of the Mennonite church is also beginning to develop some type of fraternal ties.

THERE'S ONE OTHER QUESTION . . . YOU'RE HERE TWO DAYS A WEEK AND I WONDERED HOW--JUST SCHEDULE-WISE--YOUR [phone rang--tape paused] IS THIS A FULL-TIME JOB FOR YOU?

I am, Ruth and I, have we given you our card? Ruth and I are together in this position. We call ourselves the pastoral leadership team of Huntington. We are one and a quarter time together but we take that . . . so I am, what am I? I am 7/8 time. And she is, and she would then be 3/8 time. But I take my time not during the week, my time off. We take in blocks in weeks off. So we have six weeks or so a year off that we do other things. Now, during the time that I am here, I am full-time. I work, full-time work is considered fourteen units per week. One unit is mornings, if I spend 9-12 here that is one unit. If I do something in the afternoon, that's another unit. If I have a meeting then at night, that's a unit. So, potentially, each day I could put in three units. That would then mean if worked every morning, afternoon and evening, I would complete it in just under five days. So I am full-time. But if I sit at my desk, studying my sermon for an hour or two or three some afternoon, that is also a unit. I don't need to be on the run or formally sitting in my office. Whatever kind of work I do is considered one unit.

SO THAT WAS SORT OF WORKED OUT BY THE MENNONITE LEADERSHIP, THAT KIND OF APPROACH?

That's right. That is right.

WELL, IN THE INTEREST OF NOT TAKING ANYMORE OF YOUR TIME, UNLESS YOU CAN THINK OF SOMETHING THAT HAS COME UP THAT YOU WANTED TO COMMENT ON, BEFORE WE WRAP UP.

Well, I've been happy that you asked the questions, that you're interested in the Mennonite church, knowing more about it. I wish you well in writing your paper. And I'm also available any time if you need another bit of information or another question, call me up anytime. I think part of my responsibility is to be kind of a ambassador for the Mennonite church in this community and when people like you ask, we're very happy to answer. So let that just be my final comment, call me again anytime and I'll be happy to answer any further questions because I would like to have you feel that you had to rush off just because it's almost twelve and there may be many questions that will come up later. I would guess there would be some.

THAT'S THE WAY I USUALLY HANDLE IT. JUST TO START WITH WHAT I'VE GOT AND SEE IF THAT CAN HELP ME FOCUS IN ON WHAT I WANT TO . . .

Do you feel you have the written material that you need? [tape stopped] Well, I emphasize there, ask whatever questions you like, I'll, I'm not too easily threatened. I, so whenever you have questions that you think maybe sensitive, just ask them. If I don't like them I'll let you know.

OKAY.

And that's also, again, coming back to the other issue of military people that have been part of the church, at least church life, I'd like them to have the opportunity to share with them what some of the also the frustrations have been for them among us that I'm hoping somehow without being unfair to us, I'm hoping still that your paper will reflect that--Mennonites, as I said, are very human, very much like other people. We struggle and we fail and we do other things that aren't that good but then we try and get better, so these people will hopefully tell you some of the weaker parts of our church as well, our denomination.

WELL, NOT TO GET INTO ANOTHER LONG QUESTION, BUT WE WERE TALKING ABOUT LITTLE GROUPS THAT MEET IN HOMES AND I'M WONDERING, IS THAT HOW THEY [MILITARY FAMILIES] GOT INVOLVED IN THE CHURCH? THOUGH FRIENDS?

No, although one of the military people, Jim and Dawn live just down the street here, both are apparently high ranked in the Air Force, they are leaders in one of those small house groups. So we are trying to not ostracize or reject or push to

the fringes--they are leading one of the small groups, that meet in their homes. And Jim and Dawn came because someplace way back in Jim's history, family history, his--I think it was his Grandfather--was part of the Mennonite church. And so when they moved into the community here, and just a few blocks down the street, and they saw the Mennonite church was here, I think just because of those roots they tried Huntington. So I think that is how they got involved. [There is] another couple, he was in the military, he's just recently retired. They came through the Warwick River school, the private school. Their children were attending there and then through that they came in the church here. So those are the two reasons for those two couples to be here. It's kind of a variety of ways that people come.

RIGHT, RIGHT. IT'S NOT UNUSUAL. THE SCHOOL SEEMS TO BE KIND OF A MAJOR DRAW. PEOPLE ARE SO IMPRESSED WITH THE EDUCATION THE CHILDREN GET . . .

Uhum. I sense that.

[end of interview]

# APPENDIX F: Jim and Dawn

[Before the tape began, we had been discussing an incident in church a few weeks before: during the regular sharing period of the worship service (a service that female church members had helped to lead), a male church-goer read a passage of Scripture about the proper submission of women to their husbands and fathers. I asked how this would be dealt with if it was felt someone was going too far.]

D: . . . it's usually within the elders or other areas that things are discussed, not, there's not a pulpit: okay, guys, this is what's going on. What's the common consensus? Raise your hand this way, raise your hand that way. It's not done like that.

J: There would be a lot of home meetings on it and so forth. If it's an issue for the church itself per se, and it's usually the group that gets together and discusses it. Or they have a church business meeting or a council meeting for the people of the church to come to discuss it on a Sunday evening or something like that. But in the Mennonite church, you'll find out that there are three services going on in the daytime. We have Sunday school, worship, and social [laughs]. Every church I've been to except for this one, after you have finished, you went home. Here it takes a while to get everybody out of the church to go home because there's always all that informal groups meeting to discuss all kinds of things. If there's anything that comes up during the worship service, it's always discussed at that time in little gatherings or people who haven't seen each other for a while, oh, what-are-you-going-to-do-this-week types of discussions. So, it's nothing unusual to see people kind of hanging around up to a half an hour after the service is done to discuss things. And sometimes we'll get people together just to discuss--the elders might say let's all meet right now because it's a hot issue. But it seems almost natural for them to discuss something [laughs] it just seems like it's a natural tendency that, if something comes up, it's time to discuss it. It's nothing special that they have to do or force somebody into. It seems to be a natural response, which is kind of nice.

ACTUALLY, I WAS THERE ON THE SUNDAY THE GENTLEMAN STOOD UP . . .

D: Did he? [laughs]

J: Oh! Good.

. . . DURING THE SHARING AND I WAS WONDERING WHETHER HE WAS THINKING . . .

D: Now you know. [laughs]

AND I WONDERED . . .

J: And [a woman] was worship leader that time, she was up at the pulpit . . .

D: And [another woman] was the music, yeah . . .

RIGHT. AND I SAW THAT, I GUESS THE TIMES I HAD BEEN THERE IT WAS LEADING UP TO EASTER SO I THINK THAT SHE WAS GIVING THESE READINGS, TALKING ABOUT LENT AND WHICH I GATHER IS STILL SORT OF NEW TO THE MENNONITE CHURCH IN GENERAL. THEY HADN'T NECESSARILY . . .

J: In the past, Lent wasn't a big issue with them but it's becoming that way . . .

IS IT IN ANY WAY UNUSUAL FOR WOMEN TO SPEAK A LOT . . .

D: No. Well, at Huntington it's very, the women are equally represented in the positions. And even if you talk to [the pastor and his wife] they say they are co-pastors, you know, that neither one, now [the pastor] . . . they say they're a team. That's how, if you talk to them or you see anything in writing about the pastorialship, they're the pastorial team. They chose, they were both called together and they were chosen by the church together. So it's not like it's just [him]. So at Huntington, no, it's not an issue. If you went to some of the other Mennonite ones it very well could be. I don't--have you been to Providence yet?

NO.

That's supposed, now, I've never been there either but rumor says [laughs] it is the more traditional one. And I've known some other people, they were divorced, raised Mennonite and divorced and have changed churches and they have told me that that was why. Because they're not received as well, because of the old traditions, you

know, they blew it. So they might have more problems, may not have as many women during the worship hour, but at Huntington, no. The women have always been equally represented in . . . this gentleman, it's just what he thinks and every now and then he likes to make his point.

J: He is not a Mennonite, I mean not a born-Mennonite. Okay, so he's from outside as well, non-Mennonite. Those just happen to be his interpretations.

RIGHT. RIGHT.

And he likes to emphasize those [laughs] occasionally.

BUT IT SEEMS LIKE THAT--I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S UNIQUE BUT IT SEEMS LIKE, THE FACT THAT THERE'S AN OPPORTUNITY TO STAND UP AND SHARE WHATEVER'S ON YOUR MIND--BUT THEN TO HAVE PEOPLE PRETTY MUCH TOLERATE THE THINGS THAT KIND OF TAKE THEM ABACK. [LAUGHS]

D: But, you know, to me, that represents what Christ is all about. Because, and I guess this is one reason we've stayed with the church is because, do I agree--his name's Randy--do I agree with Randy? No, not at all. I think he's off track. But does that mean I'm going to confront him or ostracize him? No. Here all you can do is pray, you know. If that's the way the Lord is leading him and that's the way he feels, then so be it. Now he needs to be tolerant of our side as well. But I can also pray that if I think he's really out of touch and really misled, that's something I need to pray about, that the Lord will work with him and change him. And as a woman, there's no way I could go and find him and say, "Randy, you're wrong!" [laughs] But maybe some of the men. But you know, here's the thing, if some of the men are called or something, they can talk to Randy on the side, and say, "Well, why do you feel that way? What do you think . . ." And you can play this scriptural ping pong back and forth and discuss it in a non-threatening way. And neither one will probably change their minds but it's open, it's open. And I don't have any problems with that. You know, here again, if we all thought the same way, life would be real boring. [Jim laughs softly] It's good and if nothing else when people do differ in their opinions, it makes you have to go back and recheck why you feel the way you do, you know, maybe he's right, maybe I'm wrong. You have to recheck why you feel the way you do and then if you feel okay then, well, that was good. You know,

you've reverified where you stand and not just because somebody told you this or whatever. You have to revalidate. If he were to do that every Sunday or to make a scene or to cause trouble, then obviously something would have to be done, somebody needs to confront him in a brotherly way, "Randy, you know, you're causing problems, you're causing dissension in the church." And then the elders and the leaders would have to determine how to handle it and if he refuses to change then, um . . . some kind of consensus would have to be reached within the leadership of the church how to deal with that. But Randy, I don't think, has done it, I don't think he's gone that far. He stands up a couple times a year and does something like that. Everybody knows it's Randy. That was it, you know? [laughs] But he's growing. If you look at somebody, and not just Randy but other people, as a Christian, everybody's always growing. You never hope to stand still. You know, even within his life, in the five years I've seen him, I've seen him change tremendously. His attitude, his mental outlook on things has changed so--the Lord is working in his life. Does that mean that he's going to come over and think the way, you know, change? I don't know. He can think that way if he wants. It doesn't hurt me.

J: . . . does force you to go back to the Scripture yourself, to reaffirm your stand . . . that you yourself also are thinking along the lines that the Lord wants you to think. So, it's also beneficial that way. That's more or less how people treat those things. Any kind of controversy, is the time that we look at scripture again. It isn't the time to sit there and yell at each other or put the walls around you and throw stones at the person and that kind of stuff. It's a time to open the Bible again and look at it again and say, is this correct? Are we looking at it correctly? Maybe that person does have something in his or her favor. You know, maybe there is some interpretation we haven't looked at. So it's kind of nice to kind of challenge once in a while, to make sure you're right. [laughs] And that's one benefit to it. If you squelch all controversy all together so that what is said from the pulpit is the way it's going to be from this point on, you've got a very boring church. [laughs] That's the thing that's kind of nice here because we, as members of the church are commanded by the Lord to test what's been told to us. To make sure it's scriptural. Anyone can make a mistake. There is no such thing as a person being better than all the rest. And a pastor, a leader of any type, can make a mistake. Our job in a congregation as fellow heirs (?) with that leader is to make sure that the leader is also within God's word, is teaching correctly. So it is our job as well to confront the individual, as a brother or a sister in Christ, and say, well, we're looking at the scripture, you

want to look at it with us? Because we don't think that what you said here was correct. Where did you get your information from? So that's also part of our job. We're not supposed to just sit there and be lambs that simply take anything given to us. So it's, this church here I think has that pretty well worked out. We do a lot of the testing, listening and discussing.

D: [whispers] Eating.

J: And eating, yes. [all laugh] Mennonites are good for eating.
D: Will you be at the welcome dinner next week?

OH, I HADN'T HEARD ABOUT THAT.

D: Oh, you are hereby invited. I'll have to get one of the invitations. But it's next Sunday and it's right after the service?

J: Right after the service, next Sunday. Huntington Church. Having a welcome table for non-members and so forth, people that we invite to come visit with the church.

WELL, THAT'S JUST BEFORE I'M GOING HOME SO IT'S GOOD TIMING.

G & J: Good, good.

D: Mennonites know how to eat right. I will say that for them. [all laugh]

[tape difficult to make out at this point--tape may have been interrupted for a moment]

J: . . . Mennonite churches, churches differ in terms of hierarchy, go ahead.

D: They're still left independent. They hire their own pastors. They don't, it's not some hierarchy above that moves the pastors around, the Bishop or even above that says, okay, we have a new pastor for you, here he is. It's not done that way where some of the denominations are. They come out of a pool and this is going to be your next pastor. I don't like that at all. And the pastor is limited. I've seen some churches where their sermons are mailed to them. And they must teach what the

church is teaching. The pastor does not even have the capability or is allowed to preach on what he thinks his congregation needs. If it's a--saying this hypothetically--if it's a Nazarine church and he's mailed his sermon, all Nazarine churches in that realm will teach the same sermon that Sunday. I don't like that at all because each congregation is different and each congregation should be run differently and have independence within itself. If they want to adhere to a common set of doctrines and a common hierarchy so if there is a feud or financial problems or say they can better support missions because three churches can support a mission family better than one, that's fine but some of them hold so much control and I don't like that.

J: The Mennonite churches do have the hierarchy as far as, like she was saying, the mission support. Because they recognize that most of those churches are small congregations and missions is still a big issue with the Mennonite church. You know, missionary, mission field work is a big push. So they together as a pool, pull all of them together in one spot for the conference and that goes to the field to support missionaries. So that's still done that way. And the conference will give you the pastoral support if needed. But the congregation has to decide on that. And that's where the overseer kind of steps in to help make sure they can help out each congregation. And [name deleted], part of his job there is to go to each of the churches within his district and he's in the Warwick District and make sure, you know, visit each one and listen to them and help them out, see where they need help and so forth. His job is more of a helper and a liaison between Conference level and the district level. So it works out pretty nice.

D: Were you an active church member?

I'D SAY NOT . . . I NEVER WAS CONFIRMED, I NEVER, UM, GOT FAR BEYOND THE YOUTH GROUP ACTIVITIES, UM, I ATTENDED A BAPTIST CHURCH WITH A FRIEND FOR SEVERAL MONTHS AND, UM, SORT OF, THAT REALLY I THINK INTRODUCED ME MORE TO . . . I SUPPOSE THAT THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES' TRADITIONAL EMPHASIS ON, UM, YOU CAN'T REALLY SAY THAT THOUGH, BECAUSE TRADITIONALLY THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN MORE CONCERNED ABOUT HAVING A CONVERSION EXPERIENCE AND THAT HAS NOT SURVIVED [laughs] WHEN I WENT TO THE BAPTIST CHURCH AND THE WITNESSING WAS TOTALLY NEW TO ME. THAT WAS NOT DONE WHEN I WAS GROWING UP AND, UM, NO PUBLIC COMMITMENT OR AND, OF COURSE, THERE

WAS INFANT BAPTISM, SO IT WAS MORE--IT WAS CONGREGATIONAL. [laughs] THERE WAS FELLOWSHIP AND CONGREGATION. SO THAT REALLY SORT OF OPENED MY EYES TO A TOTALLY--NOT TOTALLY--PRETTY SUBSTANTIALLY DIFFERENT CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. SO THAT'S REALLY, I HAVEN'T EVEN TAKEN COURSES IN RELIGION. THAT WAS REALLY MY MAIN BACKGROUND COMING INTO . . . I DON'T HAVE A LOT OF VARIETY.

D: Do you have some sort of concept of what church you'd like?

YEAH. I'VE REALLY, I'VE BEEN IMPRESSED BY WHAT I'VE LEARNED ABOUT THE MENNONITE CHURCH THUS FAR BECAUSE, UM, I GUESS BECAUSE OF WHAT YOU'RE SAYING ABOUT THE HIERARCHY. I SUPPOSE IT'S NOT UNUSUAL FOR PEOPLE TO LOOK TO THE BIBLE FOR THEIR, FOR GUIDANCE AND . . .

[I paused the tape at this point. Thinking that I had restarted the tape when in fact I had not, I lost the remainder of the interview. The following is from an interview conducted almost two months later.]

SINCE YOU'RE BOTH EMPLOYED IN THE MILITARY--ARMY OR AIR FORCE?

J: Air Force

AIR FORCE.

D: Can we shut it off right now?

[LAUGHS] I HAD ASKED YOU LAST TIME ABOUT HOW THE CHURCH HAS RECEIVED YOU, BEING IN THE MILITARY, HOW YOU HAVE, I DON'T KNOW, MAYBE RECONCILED ANY CONFLICTING, UH, THOUGHTS OR EXPECTATIONS ON THE PART OF THE CHURCH THAT YOU CAN TELL ME.

J: Okay. [to Gogh] You're not going to say anything (?) Okay, um, the church received us very well. When I first went to the church--because I was there by myself

initially--they told me right off the bat that being military I actually could not *join* the church--this was back in '87--which I understood. I didn't have any problem with that. Gogh and I haven't joined any church we've been to anywhere, since we've been in the service. We attend the churches and we participate in the churches and we get involved in them but we don't actually become members. And that's only because it's not to our best benefit to do that because we'd have to be a member of every church we went to. So we'd be a member of about six churches by now and we don't stay anyplace long enough to do that. But they didn't give us any problem about being in the military. Um, the understanding we had was that we wouldn't push the military issue--joining the military--and they in turn wouldn't harp on us about being in the military or push the peace issue to, you know, to a great extent. And we understood the peace stand and we didn't have any problem with that. We think that the conscience of the country probably needs a church like the Mennonites or a group like the Mennonites who believe in peace. It's just that that's not what Gogh and I believe. So we don't, we don't interpret the peace issue the same way they do. But they haven't given us any problem with that. Now they even offered us a chance to join the church but, of course, we didn't really have any interest in that to begin with so it doesn't really affect us.

DO YOU KNOW OF ANYONE IT DOES AFFECT?

D: What do you mean?

ANYBODY WHO MIGHT BE IN THE MILITARY AND IS ACTUALLY THINKING ABOUT MEMBERSHIP OR . . .

J: No, not off hand. There aren't that many military members in the Mennonite churches in this area. It isn't as great as they think. I think the majority of the problem wasn't with the military coming in, it was those who worked in the military industries. That's where the concern came in more than anything else. So now they've kind of given themselves a way to accept those who work in military industries, even though they always have in the past. But it kind of gives them a clear conscience on it. But, um, I don't know of any military members who have actually--I guess Mike and Jackie . . .

D: He's retired.

J: Yeah, but he's still military.

D: He's a retired air force person. I think they may have . . .

J: They may have joined the church, I'm not sure.

OKAY. IT SOUNDS LIKE IT'S BEEN NOT REALLY AN ISSUE MAYBE BECAUSE PEOPLE DON'T TALK ABOUT IT OVERTLY? OR, UM . . .

D: They do. They do. Especially during Desert Storm, Desert Shield, there was a lot of peace conscientiousness expressed. At the same time we had a lot of Mennonites approach us and say, "we appreciate you. Somebody has to do it." Which, if they didn't feel called to, they recognized and respected those that felt they had been called to . . . I think that there are a lot of Mennonites out there that aren't true pacifists--I don't think there are too many true pacifists, when it comes down to it. You'll never know until you're confronted with a situation. It's hard to say how people will react. During that . . . most people were supportive of us, you know, hey, we're talking about this but we don't want you to take it personal, we don't want to drive you away. I had a lot of real feed back in those areas. There are some that firmly believe that as Christians you will grow to a point where you will agree with them. So they just wait for us to mature to be kindred with them. Can't argue--maybe that's true. We'll wait and see. But we don't--at this time I would disagree with that.

J: That's also the basis of their membership for military. They allow military to join the church, making the assumption that members will eventually change their view and leave the military organization and accept the view of peace as the Mennonites present it.

D: And I don't like the term peace because I think we support peace. It's how to maintain peace is where we differentiate. I think the pacifist view is--it's not a peace issue. I think we're all in agreement. Nobody wants war but it's how do we deter that war, how do we prevent that that we disagree on. So I would think that the pacifistic view is what we would disagree with.

J: But there hasn't been any . . . we have had some occasions in the past where people have, who used to see us or visit with us, have, because we didn't change our

views--one or two at the most--that no longer visit with us. But that's the only thing we've ever seen. And, and that's a rarity. That's a minority. And based on this last conference even, the issue of where do you draw a line between doing something about something and just standing there and letting it happen--that's a conflict even within the church; they still don't know how to handle it. And that issue was about even using police force which the pacifistic view is you don't use any police force at all, you don't respond in force. So they're still struggling with that issue, how do you handle that.

D: I think people have the--the biggest question to us is why would we even attend a church that we don't support a hundred percent doctrinally. There's two reasons. One, we haven't found a church yet that we can a hundred percent--church doctrinally--support--differentiating between the Gospel and church doctrine. It could be whether it's grape wine or real wine, grape juice, will we use crackers or will we used leaven bread or whether you can have a deck of cards in your house or whether you can--I mean, there's so many, every church has its own little idiosyncracies. I don't think we've ever found one we agree one hundred percent with. The Gospel is the important thing. The second reason I think we've stayed is because when we first started we planned on being here for two years, three years maximum. Well, that was no problem, we'll be in and out. We won't cause any trouble. Then five years--looks like it will be six--it's a little longer than what we thought. But we never planned on staying that long, you know. That's part of being in the military. You're used to transiting so, hey, we'll be here two years, no harm done. We'll be in and out. Good experience. And that was kind of like you hate to pull up and move to a different church 'cause, it we are gone, that only gives us a year at another church so for a family that's not easy either.

WELL, UM, YOU MENTIONED PEOPLE WHO MAYBE DON'T VISIT ANYMORE AS A RESULT OF THIS. IS THAT WITH HOME CHURCH?

J: That's with home church. And like I said, that's very rare. We haven't had that happen very often. And the one instance, um, we had a discussion about why would we support our feelings about peace, our view of how to maintain peace. They couldn't understand how we could support the stand that we were supporting. So, best interest was just to, to discontinue the, um, visits, I guess you might say. We still know the people and we still see them at church. There is no real animosity there. It's just that they couldn't accept our understanding of it.

JUST HARD TO LISTEN TO OPPOSITE VIEWPOINTS AGAIN AND AGAIN, OR TO MAYBE KNOW THAT YOU HAVE THEM?

J: During Desert Storm was the only time that it became cumbersome in a way or, actually, I guess I might have said, it became old. [laughs] That's the term I use for it. Because the peace issue was hammered pretty heavily. And their view of peace differs so much that, you know, I kind of, you know, I'll sit and listen but it hasn't swayed my own opinion, my own feelings yet. It hasn't swayed Dawn either. So, we as a family have our own views on it and when we listen to what they have, we don't present our side because, first of all, it's their church and they have their own views, and their own traditions and their own doctrines they stand upon. And they feel comfortable with them. We don't feel that we have the right to come into their church and then start presenting our views only. And we don't want to make any waves or anything. And we are willing to accept them the way they are so--and they have, as a rule accepted us the way we are. Just that one issue--that's all it is. And it's really strange--it all boils down to one issue. I think Christianity as a whole should be dealt with the overall issue of Christianity and what's important to be a Christian versus one issue. And that's basically what's happening here, it's this one issue is pulled out. I think it's emphasized, I think it's emphasized a little too much. It's emphasized pretty heavily.

D: It's portrayed as their identity factor. Which, there's nothing wrong with that. Each church has its identity and that's theirs. I don't have any problems with that.

J: We've dealt with other churches in the past that had, some believe that you had to be water baptized to be saved. If not water baptized, you can't be saved, regardless if you confessed or not. Or regardless if you accept Christ. That was their identity. So, you know, we said, fine. If that's the way they believe and feel, that's okay. We just don't accept it. But that, to us, that would not stop us from having fellowship with them because they're still Christians. And this church so far hasn't used peace as a divider between us. We've [?] had fellowship with them and we haven't had any problems.

THAT'S INTERESTING. DO YOU THINK YOU STARTED OUT ABLE TO EASILY TO SORT OF COEXIST WITH DIFFERENT BELIEFS THAT YOU DIDN'T UNDERSTAND OR ACCEPT PERSONALLY OR DID IT TAKE GOING TO THAT MANY DIFFERENT CHURCHES AND MOVING AROUND

DURING YOUR CAREERS?

D: I was raised in a community church, non-denominational. So I think the way I was brought up, at least as a Christian--I wasn't in the Sunday school the whole time--but as a Christian the way I was brought up was fairly ecumenical. You know, you look at the solid foundations and that's what counts and . . . personalities--churches all have personalities and the people that pick a church will pick a church according to their own personality. Are they highly charismatic, are they highly emotional? Well, they're going to pick a church that meets those needs. If you're highly intellectual and you like the serious stuff, you're going to find a church that sticks strait to the Bible and the serious side. If you like a lot of ritual and pomp, you're going to find a church that has that because that's what your psychological, that's what you like, that's what you expect and that's what you need as far as your worship. So each church has a personality, each denomination has a personality. And I don't think there's anything wrong in that as long as the gospel portion stays intact. You can't mess with that. Those are untouchable parts. But whether the pulpit's on the side or in the middle? Come on.

[LAUGHS SOFTLY]

D: You, know that's personal preference.

J: Yes, myself, what I had--because my father started going to the church when I was young and my mom church-hopped a lot so I went with her to all the different churches. I was raised mostly in Methodist church but I spent time with my mom going to the Catholic services and Episcopalian services as well as Quaker services--that's a little extreme--anyway, Quaker services and others like that. So I've had a chance to see other churches, you know other types of services. The only time we have ever not gone to a church is when we disagreed with Biblical doctrines. Um, if they didn't *accept* things, um, Biblically the way we felt they should be, which is the basic parts, then we had some problems.

D: Well, there have been some dead churches. You know, even if you tried to pick it out in writing or talking to them what was wrong, you really couldn't but inside they were just dead. Something was missing. That's hard to define but there are [laughs softly] dead churches.

J: Most of the churches we have enjoyed have been community churches--Bible-centered. And because they are, they are non-denominational, they don't have the hang-ups of being stuck with supporting a denomination and having to teach the traditions of the denomination versus what's in the Bible.

D: Or worries about an identity crisis. How do we differentiate, what's our identity? Who cares? [laughs softly]

YOU KNOW THAT'S INTERESTING. WOULD YOU SAY WHEN THERE ISN'T AN IDENTITY QUESTION--OR IS IT JUST A DIFFERENT IDENTITY? WE'RE WITH THE, YOU KNOW, WALNUT GROVE COMMUNITY CHURCH, OR SOMETHING. THAT'S OUR IDENTITY.

D: I think if you take your, your major denominations that are so steeped in tradition that they don't want to give that up, that is something that they can identify. When they say they are Southern Baptist or Lutheran, Quaker, Mennonite, it's not just church, it is a way of living, it's a history. And that's what they want to maintain and keep. That is more than a church. I think in any evangelical and any outreach program, that has to fall by the wayside. Um, because if that becomes more important than reaching those around you, then I think your priorities are wrong. And I think that's a battle of many older churches. We've *always* done it this way. Or that family *always* taken care of the choir or whatever it might be. And you're afraid to rock the boat. You know, we've done this for 150 years, we've had it, we've had the same congregation and the same families. They just don't want to change and I think in scripture they call that a luke warm church. It's not going anywhere. It's content. And, um, I don't think Huntington's there. I think that there's always that battle, that tendency to mix its history, its traditions and its cultures in the church and not want give that up versus what is the real goal is to go out and fish for men and outreach and who do we outreach into this community. You're not going to find anybody who's not associated with the military, whether it's working at the shipyard, weapons center, the coast guard, the army, navy, air force, they're all here and they're all in a very small, confined physical area. So you have to adapt, you have to be willing to go out. And I think that's one of the conflicts that they have is that compromise. If we go out and really evangelize, who are we going to have in our churches? We're going to have defense people, you're going to have military, government employees and that is going to bring in non-family members, non-Mennonite background people and that will alter their, their way of living, their

family their church. You know the [?] and the family are so close that that's threatening. [pause] Um, and is it so bad? You know, that's where you get that small family closeness too. So it's hard to say, you know, it's--so we don't, we just, we wait for our assignment.

J: [laughs]

GIVEN THAT, [door bell rings] I WANTED TO ASK YOU HOW YOU FEEL YOU'VE BEEN RECEIVED ON A PERSONAL LEVEL BY DIFFERENT GROUPS OF PEOPLE AS FAR AS, HAS THERE BEEN A VARIATION IN MAYBE THE AGES OR BACKGROUNDS OR EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE WHO ARE BETTER ABLE TO SORT OF ACCEPT YOU THE WAY YOU ARE?

D: Yeah, I mean, I don't know that we are, I don't know that we aren't. You know, we attend things, we're never shunned. We're never . . .

J: We are asked to be involved in things. Um, we don't make a real effort to actually get involved in some things. Most of our, if we have any lack of involvement, most of it's our fault because we just don't have the desire . . .

D: We don't, we don't invite a lot of people here, we don't get invited to a lot of other places but within the church, you know, we're asked to do a lot of things within the church.

J: I think just being asked to do things like teaching, you know, take charge of different things and asked to fill leadership positions says a lot. Um, the church is willing to, to recognize us, they accept us as being fellow believers.

D: They're just desperate.

J: [laughs]

[LAUGHS]

J: Whatever the case may be!

WELL, IT SEEMS LIKE THEY MUST CERTAINLY TRUST YOU, EVEN IF IT IS A SMALL CHURCH AND THEY NEED EVERYBODY THEY CAN GET INVOLVED! DO YOU GET THE SENSE THAT THERE, YOU KNOW, THERE IS AN AFFINITY, TRUST, YOU KNOW, EXACTLY WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT?

J: . . . they also have somebody who's in charge in our classes . . . [Laughs] if we're teaching. [Laughs]

[LAUGHS]

J: That's not the reason why. I, I think so. They haven't really questioned us. They, because they have gotten to know us really well, they understand where we're coming from and they know we don't delve into any, um . . .

D: Controversial issues.

J: Yes, we always try to avoid those. We all stay clear of certain ones like predestination and peace and all that kind of stuff. Our main desire is just to study the Bible, and to learn and to grow. And so when we go to Bible studies, we do it strictly from the Bible and it's open to anybody as far as how, you know, as far as what kind of view they have of what's being presented. One nice things about the church is that they do listen to other views and do discuss things and there is a wide variety of views within the church on different issues. Um, in a Bible study, you never know what's going to come out for sure. So you get to see that first hand and that's kind of nice. There is a willingness to, to talk, not to withhold things. As a whole I would say they're kind of in the middle. They aren't ultra conservative or liberal in their views. Which to me is fine.

YOU TOLD ME LAST TIME THAT YOUR GRANDFATHER (?) WAS A MENNONITE MINISTER?

J: My great grandfather was a Mennonite Bishop.

RIGHT. RIGHT.

J: And my . . . see I'm kind of the unusual one for them because I was born in a

Mennonite family but I didn't stay in the Mennonite church, not that it was my fault in regards to that. My father stopped going. But my grandparents who are lay preachers in the church didn't really make any effort to keep me there. And they didn't really impress upon me the Mennonite views to any great extent. As a matter of fact, most of my relatives supported the idea of me going into the military which is completely contrary to what Mennonite views were. So I will say that I didn't come from a branch of the Mennonite family tree that was strongly rooted in the pacifist view. So I guess that's an influence on me.

DO YOU HAVE RELATIVES WHO SERVED IN WARS?

J: The only ones who served in wars were in the Vietnam conflict. I had a cousin that went into the war. I was the second person in my family that actually went in the military. My grandfather served in the shipyards in Philadelphia during the war building ships because jobs were few and far between and he didn't mind doing that. He actually was involved in the war industry which is also wrong to be doing if you're a pacifist. But he still served that way. But I was the only one that actually, to voluntarily join the military in my family.

YOUR MOTHER DIDN'T GROW UP IN THE MENNONITE CHURCH.

J: No, she grew up in a Lutheran environment and a Quaker environment. Her, my grandmother was Quaker, my mom was torn between two worlds; her father was Lutheran--this was in Germany--her mother was Quaker so [laughs] so she had to go back and forth. That's probably why she did so much church hopping. And the Quakers are totally different in the way they do the service and so forth. So that's a, that's a real experience in itself. So here I had, I had two pacifist backgrounds. I had Mennonite and Quaker and I joined the military. So I guess I was kind of the weird one. [laughs]

[LAUGHS]

J: That was a real challenge to them here. [laughs] I haven't heard of too many Mennonites doing that so . . . it's unusual.

WELL, I'D BE INTERESTED, WITH YOUR EXPERIENCES SORT OF BEING ON THE FRINGES OF THE MENNONITE WORLD WHEN YOU WERE

GROWING UP AND YOUR EXPERIENCE HERE, SEEING THE FAMILIES THAT GREW UP AROUND HERE, MAYBE SORT OF LEARNING TO DEAL WITH THE IDEA THAT THE CHURCH IS LESS AND LESS ETHNICALLY MENNONITE . . . ARE THERE MENNONITE STEREOTYPES THAT . . .

J: [laughs]

. . . HAVE MEANING FOR PEOPLE?

J: [laughs] I'm sure there are! When I was growing up the Mennonite stereotype was the woman with the covering, the knit covering over her hair and the very plain, fully clothed dress went down to the ankles--at least way below the knees--and down to the end of the arms. And the man always came in a dark suit, um, with a very conservative attire, usually black, as a rule. When I was growing up, the men also wore the, I think they called it, not like Gandhi top but like Nehru, the one before Gandhi. He had the suit with the little cut here in the middle (points to neck, collar).

RIGHT.

J: And a white shirt under there. So that was a very common outfit for the Mennonites and that was the symbol and that's probably why they're having so many problems today with people because when they think of Mennonites they usually think of Amish-- horse and buggies--or they think of this image. But when I was growing up, that was the image, that was the Mennonite church and you could not join the church unless you were Mennonite to begin with. Your family had to be Mennonite. The church was family-oriented, you had to be born and bred Mennonite, as the saying was. So, outsiders just didn't come in unless they married into a Mennonite family. That's the only time they came in. Then when I came back from Washington state and moved here in '87, this church was a complete difference from what I was used to. I mean, here women dressed in, you know, modern attire. You didn't have the coverings and so forth. You had some with coverings and some without. The men came dressed in knit shirts and slacks. I mean, you didn't do that in the Mennonite church when I was growing up. Um, the church had changed dramatically since I was . . .

D: Geography's different too.

J: That's true. That's true. Geography's different--up in Pennsylvania, I'm told, the church is still very conservative. Yeah, so, Mennonite . . .

D: We would in no way be allowed to attend if we went up to Pennsylvania or maybe even Northern Virginia.

J: Now, I think this area drove the Mennonite church to change its approach. So they changed it based on the fact that they are within a very strong military or military industry area. Um, they had no choices here and there are fewer and fewer ethnic Mennonites here and more and more non-ethnic Mennonites here. But when you go to the conference you see Mennonites from other parts of the state who have no idea whatsoever what it's like to work with the military. They don't encounter them, they never see them, they never visit them. So to them the military is still a, a group of heathens to be shunned. And that's some of the discussion we've had at conference too.

D: Oh, yeah.

J: 'Cause the Tidewater churches wanted to do this membership thing and last year we had a big discussion about that. You know, conference issues about allowing military in the church was a big issue.

WAS IT, IT WAS BROUGHT OUT FOR GENERAL DISCUSSION?

J: Oh, yes. Again and again. [laughs] You had those from the western part of the state, like I said they have no idea what it was like to work for the military, they have never encountered them in their entire life. And they were drawing conclusions on what they had been told about the military. And as far as they're concerned, the military is a group you never approach. And in the past that's the way it always was. In the Mennonite church you did not approach the military. If you were military you were not allowed near the church. As far as they were concerned you were, you know . . .

D: Like go get the prostitutes and the drug addicts but don't touch the military! [laughs]

J: You know, you were kind of like a person who had acquired leprosy in Christ's

time. A leper. And we had, last year in the Conference, we had one individual who associated [working] with the military with working with gays. You know, with the homosexuals in California. He says, you know, if you're going to let the military in, why don't you let the homosexuals in too and let them be part of our ministry? And I was thinking that, that's pretty cold [laughs] to put us in the same group. So that's a real big issue in the church. And so far the Virginia Conference has let the Tidewater churches do what they wanted to because of the area. Whether or not you work in the military or whether or not you are a prostitute in the street or if you're a murderer or anything else like that, they're all the same people in God's eyes. A sinner is a sinner. Period. And to, to, to classify people as someone you will not approach is to say that, God, I know we're supposed to approach people but we will not approach this group, period. So therefore you've told the Lord, that you will not do what he's commanded and that's the problem, and that's the one issue the church has to address.

D: Yeah, but we had to differentiate too. We don't think that just because you're in the military you're a sinner.

J: Well, but I'm saying that . . .

D: Yeah, that's how they look at it.

RIGHT. RIGHT. [PAUSE TAPE] [We had begun to talk about the Virginia Conference summer retreat which I had attended since the first interview with them]

J: You can tell the comments that they [tape interrupted] some of the older rules yet, like they still want women to come in a skirt or a dress--to the meetings only. We have more and more showing up in just shorts but they sat on the fringes, without getting in the middle, because there's still some discomfort with the idea of pressing the issue as far as dress so . . . when you have a mixture of the, of the old order or the conservative side of the church and the less conservative side of the church, you're going to have that issue of dress. That's the first thing they always run into is dress. How do you look? Then they begin from there. So, you have to have some more compromise there. So for the conference still says very clearly that conservative attire with a skirt for women . . .

D: It does not. They took that out two years ago. It doesn't mention skirts

anymore. It just says conservative attire.

J: Hmm.

I NOTICED THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE WERE WEARING, YOU KNOW, WOMEN WERE WEARING SKIRTS . . .

J: [they do within] our own circle, the Huntington circle. Some of them still bring skirts to wear just to the meetings.

D: But it doesn't, it no longer says that.

J: Well, but you can tell it's still like the conscious concern there about . . . [end of side one]

. . . but this is probably one of the more _____ areas when it comes to things like that. I guess the nicest thing about the church that I can see is that they have put most of the decision-making authority at the district or the congregational level. So you don't have one conference where everybody has to do the same thing. That's kind of nice because that way you can have churches that actually can develop more character and more separate identity than the main denominations. That's, that worked out well for us, this area here has worked out well. [pause] But the church still has this family center, background and it still hasn't gotten used to the idea of going out or reaching out to the community yet.

D: I think evangelism as a whole is a Mennonite [pause] holdback. They don't like, they're not going to be pushy. They're going to be quiet. They're going to witness by their lifestyle. They're not going to go door to door. They're not going to go to a mall and pass out tracts. That's not their philosophy. Their philosophy is . . .

J: Passive evangelism.

D: . . . if you live next to me, you will see Christ in me. I'm a hard worker, I'm a good person and that's how I will witness to you. But they're not going to go door to door.

J: And that's hold over from the background of the Mennonite church itself. In the

past the church was all, you didn't have to really evangelize, as far as actively evangelize--going door to door and so forth--because you were all family. And it was normally assumed that anybody who was born into a Mennonite family would attend the church and grow up in the church. So there really wasn't a need for that. Now because there are less and less ethnic Mennonites in the church, they need to start approaching people. And they're making, they're trying to make a transition, not very fast, but they're making a transition from the passive evangelism to an active evangelism. And that's probably one of the biggest issues. And you'll probably see it happen here again before you see it anyplace else.

WHAT, UM, . . . WHEN YOU SPEAK OF ACTIVE EVANGELISM, WHAT FORM DO YOU THINK THAT WOULD TAKE?

J: Well, that's like what she was saying: going door to door, going, passing out tracks, going to the malls to witness, um, being able to approach people and say, you know, we're from this church and we want to share Christ with you and here's what we'd like to share with you and invite them to services [?] and things like that. Active, actually taking part, doing something versus, um, just, um, letting your lifestyle be the one show. I mean, they both go hand in hand. The lifestyle, that backs up what you're saying. But, um, in the past, there wasn't a need for that. Now there's probably more and more need . . . because you don't have the families anymore. Well, you do, but not as much.

[Before restarting the tape, I had asked them if they would like to hear some questions I had developed for a possible group discussion. I now begin asking them these questions.]

WELL, UM, I--LET'S SEE IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN OR YOU THINK IT SOUNDS INTERESTING. THE FIRST IS SIMPLY: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A MENNONITE? AND, YOU KNOW, ARE THERE IDEAS, FEELINGS OR BEHAVIORS WHICH ARE INAPPROPRIATE OR FORBIDDEN FOR MENNONITES? WE TALKED ABOUT SOME OF THOSE THINGS. UM, WHAT KINDS OF OCCUPATIONS--WE TALKED ABOUT THE MILITARY AND MILITARY MANUFACTURING--WHAT ABOUT MEMBERSHIPS IN OTHER KINDS OF GROUPS OR RELATIONSHIPS THAT ARE FORBIDDEN TO MENNONITES?

J: Well, there was also the issue of the police force--anything involved with the use of force as a part of daily life, daily job, was considered not appropriate at one time. So that's business and areas that they have to address, besides just military. That includes the police, um, where's law enforcement--at the Conference we talked about law enforcement. When do you use it? Paul in the Bible used law enforcement continuously for his benefits, where you could spread the Gospel but that there were people who questioned the idea of using law enforcement at all or anything. And then being members of law enforcement was not considered appropriate.

That's changing as well.

I WAS INTERESTED IN, ONCE YOU BECOME A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH, WHAT DOES ONE HAVE TO DO TO BE A MEMBER IN GOOD STANDING AND ARE THE STANDARDS OF MEMBERSHIP APPLIED EQUALLY TO EVERYBODY OR DOES IT MATTER, YOU KNOW, . . .

D: I can't answer that.

J: Yeah, we're not members. I can't answer it. I know about the membership restrictions they apply to military joining the church is different than members who are not in the military.

MMHM.

J: Um, one of the restrictions placed upon those who join who are in the military that they would not advocate the position of the military. And they would also be willing to receive the teaching and doctrine of peace. So, that was one of the stipulations that was placed strictly upon military members. But that was what they had in writing. I really don't know if there is anything else because we haven't made any effort to join.

[MURMURS] YEAH, YEAH. I SUPPOSE YOU'VE SEEN SEVERAL BAPTISMS AND THE CEREMONY SURROUNDING JOINING THE CHURCH. I WONDER WHAT YOUR OBSERVATIONS ARE. I SAW ONE JUST A COUPLE WEEKS AGO. AND THERE WERE TWO YOUNG GIRLS WHO I ASSUME HAD GROWN UP IN THE CHURCH, AT LEAST FOR A WHILE. AND THEN AN OLDER MAN. HOW DO THEY GO ABOUT IT, DO YOU

KNOW? WHAT KIND OF PREPARATION?

D: Not that I know of. They have classes, you know, membership classes that they attend prior to [voice trails off] . . . um, we haven't been to them.

J: There is a class for . . . you have to understand the doctrines of the church and be willing to confess those and then what used to be _____ service after that--confession of faith and willingness to become a member of the church. Baptism is basically the same thing.

ARE THERE QUITE A FEW PEOPLE WHO JUST ATTEND AND AREN'T NECESSARILY CONSIDERING MEMBERSHIP? ARE YOU AWARE OF THAT?

D: I think there's quite a few.

J: I don't know how many, what percentage, but we know of at least a few couples, actually, that aren't members and just attend like us.

D: The [pastoral team] can answer that.

[pause] J: We . . . they do invite those who don't, who aren't members but do attend regularly--they call us, uh, "regular attendees"? Something like that.

[LAUGHS] YEAH.

J: But we are involved in the business issues of the church and things like that now as when we first started . . .

D: You do have some [of them?] voting . . .

J: . . . some of these issues . . .

D: . . . whereas before you couldn't vote . . .

J: yes.

D: . . . which you remember. Now they have regular attendees can, so--and we've never said anything so I don't think it has anything to do with us. It's just something they've come to.

AND THEY'RE PROBABLY REALIZING THAT, BEING IN THIS AREA, THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO ARE MOVING IN AND OUT A LOT.

D: Yeah, we've seen a lot of families come and go--Mennonite as well. You know, all the kids come in and they go to school, leave, get jobs, get married and move where ever. Different missionaries that have [?]. So there's a pretty good transition.

HOW DO PEOPLE WHO GROW UP IN THIS COMMUNITY DECIDE WHICH CONGREGATION THEY'RE GOING TO GO TO? DO YOU HAVE ANY SENSE OF THEIR CHOICE OF THIS CONGREGATION OVER THE OTHER, WARWICK RIVER, OR WHY?

D: [exhales] The people I know that have been in this area, grew up in this area, attend Huntington, their parents or they themselves were part of establishing Huntington church. Um, they saw it begin. You know, they were the instigators behind it. So that they think they've stayed out of that. Um, [pause] I don't think there are any other groups that grew up in this area as Mennonite that did not have an impact on the establishment of Huntington. I think they're at Warwick and the other churches. I think that was kind of how it divided up.

THAT WAS MY IMPRESSION. I WASN'T SURE.

J: And others that we know of, friends of ours who have grown up in this area, did basically the same thing with their own churches. They [?] attend Huntington. They've gone to churches that they've been raised in or are familiar with. But Huntington was definitely one that you were familiar with because most of the people who go to that church don't live in the immediate area. Most of them live way outside of it. So they were involved in some way in establishing the church and they kept coming--loyally, coming into the church. There are very few of us, actually, who live next to the church.

WELL, I'M NOT REALLY SURE WHAT OTHER KINDS OF THINGS ON HERE YOU COULD ANSWER DIRECTLY. [PAUSE] I HAVE HEARD

DIFFERENT THINGS ABOUT WHETHER THERE REALLY IS A MENNONITE IDENTITY ANYMORE OR WHETHER IT'S BECOMING JUST LIKE, YOU KNOW, ANOTHER CHRISTIAN DENOMINATION BECAUSE IT'S NOT REALLY A "SPECIAL" GROUP ANYMORE. ARE MENNONITES JUST LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE OR ARE THERE STILL SOME DIFFERENCES?

D: It depends on where you're talking about. If you talk about Huntington, I think they're probably correct. They're losing their Mennonite identity and becoming more [?]. But if you were to go North, you would see, I think, much more.

J: I think as long as the church pushes the pacifist view, they'll never lose their identity. Um, [pause] the difference between the churches is that one emphasizes it more than others. This church emphasizes it the least amount. The Northern churches emphasize it much, much more because they, they're in an area where they have historically been a Mennonite people. So they can easily emphasize it there. They all know each other and say, yeah, that's the one. [knock on the door] There's Les.

IT WAS [the] PASTOR WHO REALLY SAID TO ME, SEVERAL TIMES, YOU KNOW MENNONITES ARE JUST LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE [LAUGHS]. YOU KNOW, WE HAVE OUR FOIBLES AND . . .

D: You don't think he was talking about the person versus the church?

YEAH, ABOUT INDIVIDUALS, ABOUT . . . HE WAS, YES, EMPHASIZING THAT THERE ARE NO SELF-DELUSIONS ABOUT MENNONITES ARE SOMEHOW BETTER AT BLOCKING OUT THE WORLDLY WORLD AND MAINTAINING GOOD THOUGHTS AND GOOD BEHAVIOR AND WHATEVER. HE WAS JUST SORT OF, YES, ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THEY'RE VERY HUMAN AND THEY MAKE MISTAKES AND THAT ONE OF THOSE MISTAKES COULD EVEN BE MAYBE--I DON'T THINK HE WOULD HAVE SAID PRIDE OR EVEN THE WORD SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS BUT HE IMPLIED THAT, YOU KNOW, THEY'RE AWARE THAT HISTORY CAN BE A POWERFUL THING. AND IT MIGHT BE USED AS MAYBE A WEAPON SOMETIMES: UM, WE'VE GOT THIS SPECIAL HISTORY, THIS IS WHAT IT MEANS TO . . .

J: Drop the phrase, "I'm a Mennonite," and start using the phrase, "I'm a Christian."

MMM.

J: That's the problem that I have with denominations. That's a personal problem. I can't speak for Dawn. Um, I feel that the denomination loses its impact and its focus on their role as a Christian when they start calling themselves their denominational name. You know, when they say, "I'm a Quaker," or "I'm a Presbyterian," or a Mennonite, or a Methodist, they're identifying with a tradition, a man versus God's calling. When they identify themselves as "I'm a Christian," then they have separated themselves from the tradition and then I think they can fulfill God's calling. But we get hung up on the traditions that come with the denomination. Now the Mennonite church I think has, has, has been able to kind of shake off a lot of traditions, like a worn coat, um, in some areas. But you still have the very conservative Mennonite church which will not change. I guess it serves its purpose too, maybe. You can go there and feel comfortable that way. Unfortunately, I kind of feel sorry for them because they're so steeped in tradition, they don't understand that they're building a barrier around themselves. So, but they must have some kind of a problem here with getting the people because they do have a pamphlet they hand out now saying, "What is a Mennonite?" So I guess now the church isn't as well known as the other churches are. And they are trying to grow, trying to get, to mainstream and they want to attract people, they want to, um, to share God's word with people. And they want to bring more people into the church so now they have to begin facing the identity--not from themselves but their identity with the world. In other words, people around them have to know what the Mennonite church is.

UMHM.

J: And obviously, there are a lot of misconceptions around there about what are Mennonites. Most people know what Presbyterians are, and most know what Methodists are, and most of them, all know what Baptists are! [Laughs] I mean, so . . . I think that's where the problem is, that they're facing right now, is making themselves known to the rest of the people around them. They aren't monsters. [laughs] They are people.

I DON'T KNOW IF YOU HAVE ANY THOUGHTS ON THIS BUT ONE THING

I'VE BEEN WONDERING ABOUT IS: ARE PEOPLE CONCERNED WITH THE ISSUE OF HOW CAN WE BE AN OPEN, INCLUSIVE GROUP THAT REALLY IS JUST CHRISTIAN, LIKE YOU SAY, AND YET STILL HAVE THE BENEFITS OF A SMALL COHESIVE GROUP THAT, WHETHER OR NOT YOU'D USE THE IDEA OF IDENTITY, JUST HAVING A GROUP WHERE EVERYBODY KNOWS EACH OTHER, WHERE YOU SUPPORT EACH OTHER AND THAT IN A SENSE DOES HELP START DEFINING YOU. HOW DO YOU RECONCILE THAT OPENNESS WITH THAT BELONGING?

D: I don't think it's happened yet. I don't think it has been reconciled. I think you have those in the church who would like to see it grow and you have those that don't want it to.

J: You have those who enjoy that family atmosphere where everybody knows everyone and they can spend time together and so forth and they're afraid that, if you grow, you'll lose that.

D: I think there's a lot of complacency . . . self-contentment: "I have my friends, I have my family, I have my church. What more is there?" There's no . . . there's no . . . [sighs] no willingness to maybe compromise that. You bring in too many people, that's a threat. So I think there's a lot of hesitancy to do active evangelism, active recruiting in the church.

I WONDERED IF THE HOUSE CHURCH WAS SORT OF AN EFFORT TO DEAL WITH THAT: ALLOW FOR GROWTH BUT STILL HAVE A SMALL GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO ARE VERY CLOSE.

D: House church?

J: That small group she was referring to.

THE, UM . . .

J: Small group is the way we refer to it.

OKAY.

J: But when [the pastor] presented the idea, his concept was that small groups were going to serve the role of evangelism to some extent by inviting friends to a less threatening location or surrounding environment. And therefore the church would grow through small groups but also be able to satisfy the needs of having a small group of people who would be able to share each others' needs and support each other. So they'd feel that close to us. So they had both worlds, so to speak: a growing church plus also still maintain some closeness. In a large church with a lot of people, small groups I feel are probably the only way you can have some closeness and feel like you belong. I don't know if small groups are the right idea or the answer for a small church. And I don't know whether that would be the way to draw people into the church. True, it would be a less threatening atmosphere in a small group . . .

D: But see, it actually becomes more threatening. A lot of times what happens is you'll have a small group, six to eight people--they get too close. Nobody else is welcome because sharing becomes too deep, too intimate. They don't want anybody else to know what's going on. Um, so for a third party to come in off the street and here they're talking some really, maybe some marital problems or depression problems or, you know, alcohol problems, you know, things that they don't want to spread around. Now you're dealing in that . . . when a stranger comes in, you can't talk about those things anymore. Here maybe there's a couple or a person or something that's really been getting some heavy help from this small group. That third party off the street now is the new person that needs to be discipled and this person here is not ready to move on to the next. So, sometimes too I think small groups, even if it's not heavy and serious, have just become so comfortable with each other that that's their friendship, that's their social life. And if you're my best friend and we meet in small groups and we're doing everything else together, I'm going to be offended if you start associating with this other group and develop new friendships and you're not sharing with me anymore. So I think small groups, they meet the need. You have those serious issues that need to be dealt with in a small group as important for . . . at the same time that small group becomes clique-ish, closed. Therefore you have the problem with getting new people in. If you have numerous groups and you can keep them balanced, maybe you have a couple of them that are closed and a couple of them that are open, you know, maybe it balances each other out. Um, but in a small church, how many do you have to work with? And you get people that meet together for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 years, constantly. It's real hard for somebody just to come in and feel that rapport that the group had before.

J: And there are some members of our church that actually need to have a certain type of group. They have depression and problems like that really hamper them and draw them down and they need that support. But that group becomes dominated by that one individual's problems or the people in the group themselves they all have a common problem, it becomes the dominant purpose of the group. And in cases like that the small group would work out well just to help them share and to grow and help each other out. I don't think small groups--I think right now the church is going through a very evolutionary stage on the small groups. They're not really sure how to use them and there have been different ideas thrown back and forth. Should we use them for evangelism or not? Should we use them just for fellowship? Should we use them for caregiving to each other? Should we use them to share burdens? What's the purpose of a small group? So I think they're still going through a stage just for that. And I don't think that small groups will work out well for the entire church. I think there will always be some who do not wish to be in a small group. And that's true that if a new person comes into the church they're going to sit in the back pew and listen and not be threatened by having to respond to a small group of people . . . [in a small group] they can't hide. It's easier to sit in the back pew and hide than it is to talk and share and so forth. I just think small groups work better in a large church because they have a real need there and usually those groups are that are more geared toward common likes and common hobbies and common things they want to do together. If you enjoy in-depth Bible study, there's a small group just for that purpose so you can enjoy in-depth Bible study together. If you enjoy motorcycling, there's a motorcycling group. Enjoy rockclimbing, there's a rockclimbing group. Hiking, things like that. And you have fellowship that way. Small groups work out well, so you get to know some of the people in the church and you can fellowship and call upon them when you need help. But in this church it's becoming more difficult for small groups to exist because it's so small. You know most of the people in the church because there aren't that many. We have a small group that meets here and most of it is . . . it's more of a fellowship group, close friends type group than anything else. I don't know how well it would work if outsiders came in.

D: We've always said we're an open group. We'd like outsiders. But it's really hard. I mean, who are you going to bring in really? I mean, it's pretty rough. Ah [pause] you know you invite somebody, that's pretty threatening. Unless they know all of you already. Um, just to invite somebody to come over--yeah, sit around and chat with six people you've never seen before! [laughs] That's not [laughs] . . . that's pretty

rough!

J: Now if you had a less-threatening environment like the meals or like that or a picnic or barbecue, gathering out there, you'd probably bring them in easier that way. But eventually you're going to have to . . . you know, you can't have meals all the time. Eventually you have to . . . you know, it gets to the point where you actually have to share. I just don't think small groups are going to bring people into the church. I think that small groups are a good way for people that are in the church to get to know each other and to help each other out and have a close body of friends. But there is no rule set [?] you can apply to every group. And groups have to be allowed to be created spontaneously, I think, at times. But friendships of course are more like that. So the church is still learning about that, still experimenting: what is a small group and how does it fit?

WELL THAT'S INTERESTING BECAUSE THAT'S SOMETHING WE DIDN'T DISCUSS AS MUCH LAST TIME. GOOD. WE JUST TOUCHED ON IT BEFORE.

[I paused the tape and asked a question from my list: Are the standards of membership applied equally to everyone? Does it matter whether you grew up in the church? Jim and Dawn either played at being surprised or truly were surprised when I turned on the recorder again. At any rate, there was note of playful sarcasm in there protests.]

J: Aw! [all laugh] Aw! I thought we weren't going to say this on tape! [laughs]

OKAY. THAT'S NO PROBLEM. I JUST, YOU KNOW . . .

J: The problem you run into I think with a church that's focus has been, or its foundation has been a family church, that the tendency is that if you're born and raised in a family, a church family-- where your parents go and you go on a regular basis--you have a tendency to not really emphasize anything of any great importance. Because you make an assumption, you make an assumption that because the parents are going to church, the child will learn and then the child will automatically be protected, will become a Christian. So you have a tendency not to really spend time digging deep into God's Word. You just hit the surfaces--the important facts only and leave all the rest behind. And I think that that's what's happening with a(h),

with a(h), the Mennonite church over the years. And I think now they're starting to realize that because they have people coming from outside of the church who are not ethnic Mennonites, who aren't from Mennonite families, that they have to find something to keep them coming. So there are a few of us who are challenging that idea of getting in deep, trying to learn, trying to really study. I enjoy a good Bible study. Dawn enjoys discussing theology, she enjoys challenging. We don't have that all the time here. We had some in the church that will challenge it with us and we enjoy that. Um, but I think that the main reason why we don't have that much, at least here and other churches, other Mennonites I've talked to, is because they are comfortable, maybe almost too comfortable with the fact that they were born and raised Mennonite. They make some assumptions. I think that danger can happen in any church, not just Mennonite. Any time you have a family-oriented church that also has the same ethnic peoples in the church, they belong to the same family tree, feeding the church the entire time, you have the tendency to become very complacent . . . and you make some assumptions.

WELL, WOULD YOU SAY THE EMPHASIS--I GUESS THE DISTINCTION YOU'RE MAKING IS MORE ON HOW MUCH DEPTH YOU GO INTO OR MAYBE A CLOSE READING OF THE BIBLE AS A TEXT OR ARE THERE REAL DIFFERENCES OF EMPHASIS LIKE LIFESTYLE VERSUS (OR, HOW DO YOU SAY THAT) HOW YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE VERSUS . . . ?

D: A good example, I think, is if you take lifestyles. You get somebody up there that will talk about the lifestyle we should have and they'll come out with wonderful points and good things to say but they won't back it up with scripture. It's all assumed that this is what the Bible says. I think we would rather see a verse expounded in supporting this specific lifestyle: look at the way Paul lived, . . . you can go through different characters and pull out what you're trying to say. Use scripture. There's nothing wrong with what you're saying. What you're saying is good but the Bible's not mentioned. The scripture is not supported, um, and that's what we're supposed to be learning, the scripture. Take those good points you have but use the scripture to back them up. Mention where those good points came from. You know, what are those lifestyles? What are they based on? How is that brought out from scripture?

YEAH.

J: You can, a general rule of thumb used to measure that is, how many people do you see in the aud--, in the congregation with Bibles open and when you leave, when you leave it, did you really have to use the Bible at all? Was there any reason [?] to open it, was there any challenge given to you to even look the scripture up to see if that's what it says, if you get the same understanding or not? If there's no challenge given and you don't have to use the Bible at all, then there wasn't a real effort made to support it with Scripture and I think that's important. I think it's important for us to have roots and we should base everything that we're learning on what the scripture has to say. I mean, they are good thoughts. There are a lot of psychologists up there with a lot of good ideas and they may be scripture-based, they may not be. But the Lord tells us to know His Word. And we have to base it on something. So that's the main thing.

YEAH.

D: But I was curious, your, your observations, that's where we were . . . [I paused tape]

ISSUES OF, YOU KNOW, HUMILITY AND PLAINNESS, ARE THEY STILL THERE AND, YOU KNOW, WORRYING ABOUT SHOWING WEALTH . . .

D: Still there.

J: Yeah, still there. The wealth issue especially. It's real difficult. They're still attacking that one. What I liked about the church is that the church is not a wealthy church . . . [end of tape] Do you want me to repeat all that? [laughs]

NO, THAT'S OKAY. THERE'S STILL A CONCERN WITH HUMILITY AT LEAST OUTWARDLY, NOT BEING EXTRAVAGANT AND MISUSING MONEY, OR BEING CONCERNED ABOUT THAT TOO MUCH. I WONDERED, ARE THERE STILL QUESTIONS ABOUT TO WHAT EXTENT PEOPLE SHOULD BE WATCHING TV OR GOING TO THE MOVIES OR, YOU KNOW, HOW IN TUNE YOU SHOULD BE WITH POPULAR CULTURE?

D: I think you'll see the whole gamut in that church. I think you'll see those that just plain movies are out. And those that, hey, you know . . .

J: When we think about it . . .

D: . . . to each his own.

J: . . . you know, you think about it, though, today [chuckles under his breath] most of them probably agree that what is there to watch anymore? You know, movies, theaters and so forth, it costs too much and the ratings are so off the wall anyway. You can't trust what's in them. It's so rare that you can find a real family movie that you can enjoy.

D: But you still watch them, so . . . but I think you'd see the whole gamut there. And the same with music. I think there are those that are still against rock music even if it's Christian rock. [Jim laughs softly] The traditional Mennonites, I understand, did not use instrumentation. So we're even more advanced because we use a piano and organ and guitarist, um, but they'll still sing a capella songs. They run a whole gamut. I know not too long ago, it was a couple years ago, they wanted to take the kids to a rock concert, a Christian rock concert. It was "Petra" or something. The church decided no, that probably wouldn't be appropriate. Um, so there's still some conservativeness, you know, towards everything.

IS THERE MAYBE SOME EFFORT TO LOOK AT CONTENT? IS THERE STILL MAYBE SOME FEELING THAT YOU DON'T WANT TO BE TOO MODERN?

J: I think a lot of their concern isn't really with being too modern as much as it's, um . . . they're unsure as to where it will lead them. They don't want to run the risk of it leading them elsewhere. Um, yeah, for example, they are very much against the idea of smoking and they will encourage you not to but they won't shun you for doing it. Um, but, they want to encourage not smoking. They want to encourage control, having self-control . . . there's nothing wrong with that. And if that self-control then deals with the things that you know will cause problems for you, to lose that self-control (rock music [?] things like that) then you may have to do away with those. But there's also still a conservative streak that doesn't want to change as well . . . that's probably why I have a different opinion about rock music [laughs]

. . . WELL . . .

D: . . . [white-collar] church versus a blue-collar church.

J: I call it the mixture of having both and they certainly a mixture here 'cause you have some of those like Jim and so forth who are business people and then you still have the tradesmen. The Mennonites have always--in the past--have always been farming or trades, nothing else.

RIGHT. RIGHT.

J: And now it's starting to grow out of that. I think the church as a whole is doing very well, the church as a whole. They are growing. They're starting to kick off some of the legalistic views and they're starting to realize that they're growing out and they need to attract other people to the church. I think they're doing it very slowly and, to me, which is kind of wise and they're tackling issues they wouldn't have even looked at ten years ago. And tackling one issue at a time rather than trying to just grow all of a sudden. I think because of the approach they're using, it will take a while for them to reach their goal but at least I think they retain that foundation and they won't fall over and they'll keep growing. So I think they will succeed in the end. I just wish [lets out a breath] that, um, they weren't so hooked on pacifism [laughs]. At least their interpretation of it, I should say.

WHILE THE TAPE IS ROLLING, I'LL JUST QUICKLY REITERATE WHAT YOU WERE SAYING BEFORE. THIS IDEA THAT MODERN PEOPLE WHO STILL WORK WITH THEIR HANDS, WHETHER THEY'RE WORKING IN AGRICULTURE OR DOING THE TRADES, MAYBE HAVE A CLOSER AFFINITY OR PERSONAL EXPERIENCE TO HELP THEM UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURE . . .

J: I think what I mean by that--I won't put down the people who work in business. I mean, working in business I think you get tied up a lot of times with the issues that deal with your business. Christ, when he talked to the disciples, referred to the things that the disciples knew. And the disciples, let's face it, were tradesmen. So he talked in terms that they understood. On the psalms, when the psalms tell you about creation, about the beautiful mountains and so forth, they're talking about things that God has created. And the farmer would understand that. The tradesmen who have to work with their hands, understand the meaning of if they don't work they don't eat. You understand? The meaning of, when he says the idle hands are

a danger. They should be active doing things. They understand that. And the business people understand it too but they just think--it's just the focus is a little different. Now business can do the same thing. It's not saying that one is better than the other. I think a mixture is great because sometimes the tradesman gets lost when it comes to the prophet area and the wise use of money and things like that. So I think the two compliment each other very well. But to have a church that is either all one or all the other, I think, kind of loses out. It's nice to have a mixture. And this church is getting a mixture in. Um, I think the mixture is leaning a little more toward the business side but it has a nice mixture in it.

[end of interview]

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